■ BUSINESS / B1
RP outlook change to positive premature, says credit rating firm

■ LIFESTYLE
Randy dandy's advice to male clients: Stick to classics before letting go

■ NEWS / A2
Subic van driver tagged an accomplice in alleged rape by US Marines

■ ENTERTAINMENT
All of Hollywood fly by private jets to New York to party

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

For fifth time, oil firms cut fuel prices by 50c/liter

By Ronnel W. Domingo

FOR THE FIFTH TIME THIS MONTH, OIL companies yesterday slashed the prices of gasoline and kerosene by 50 centavos a liter.

Pump prices of gasoline in the country have dropped a total of P2.85 to P33.10 a liter and ...

GMA removes Palace press corps from Kalayaan Hall

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

IT EARLIER HEARD ITS hand in many ends as partner-crossing Malacañang now she apparently needs all of those hands[illegible]

A media event in Pasig ...

Friday, November 25, 2005 ▲ 56 pages / vol. 29 / no. 299

Peso rallies to 54.17 vs $

If someone lied, let God be the judge, bishop tells flock

By Christine V. Esguerra

IN ESSENCE, MARIA ARCHbishop Lucaltromio Rosales wants the people to see, hear and speak no evil.

"Let us leave the judgments to the Lord," Rosales said yesterday in Filipino.

He added, in apparent reference to accusations leveled at President Macapagal-Arroyo: "I'm not making jokes. To me, whether or not there is a problem, a vote, a controversial, thousand or more, let's put that aside."

Rosales, who has spoken up only rarely since the start of the political crisis involving ...

SMALL COMFORT. Eight-year-old Jerlyn Bautista, one of the quadruplets being prayed for by children, cries at the wake for her brother, program proponent President Arroyo has still time to calm him down.

GMA allies rolling out red carpet for Garci

By Michael Lim Ubac and Philip C. Tubeza

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo's allies are rolling out the red carpet for the appearance of Virgilio Garcillano at a Senate inquiry after a night of long knives that saw the marginalization of key committees apparently to give a smooth chance to the "Hello Garci" affair.

The ax fell on four of the five heads of the House committees that jointly conducted an investigation of the wiretapping scandal and came up with a draft report last week that found that the former administration attempted to cover up revelations the President stole last year's election.

Reinstated to an executive session of the panels, also last week, resulted in a deadlock until administration lawmakers insisting that the report highlight a conclusion that the wiretapped telephone conversations pinpointed Arroyo herself as the mastermind in the alleged cheating.

On Wednesday night, House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles moved and got the nods of the majority to replace Cavite Rep. Gilbert Remulla, public information, Batasan Mutya Rep. Satur Ocampo, peace, reconciliation and unity; Akbayan Rep. Loretta Ann Rosales, human rights; and Mamamayan Rep. Edmundo ...

OFW money, investments from abroad lift currency

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PESO YESTERDAY rose to its highest level in over six months, extending a month-long rally that has made it Asia's best performer this year.

The peso rallied to 54.17 per dollar, its highest traded level since May, before ending at 54.30 or the same rate as the previous day, as corporations found a good opportunity to scoop up cheaper dollars.

The local currency has risen 3 percent in the past month.

"The peso is supported by continued inflows from overseas Filipinos workers and foreign investments," said Dave Santiago, deputy governor of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

Remittances from overseas Filipinos workers peak around Christmas, the most important holiday in the predominantly Catholic country.

Janet McGeachin, Fitch Ratings head of Asia Pacific sovereign ratings, said the country's strong external position was leading to the peso's appreciation.

"Remittances tend to be a reliable source of foreign currency earnings. They should show in the balance of payments," McGeachin said. (See related story in Business, Page B1.)

He said the foreign exchange reserve position was very good. "I think that these two factors [remittances and dollar reserves] are basically what's behind the improvement in the exchange rate."

The country's budget deficit in the first 10 months was lower than targeted. National Treasurer Omar Cruz said Wednesday he expected the government to run a budget deficit of P140 billion for the full year. P40 billion smaller than forecast.

Shridath Ramphal, ABN AMRO Bank's currency strategist, said "a lot of positive news" was the driving side and a big flourish-up from the IMF for the Philippines" were boosting the peso.

Earlier this week, the International Monetary Fund said the country had made significant progress with economic reforms ...

Lawmakers carve Samar Nature Park for mining

By Blanche S. Rivera

AFTER LOOKING HIDING HAS passed through legislative action on second year the Samar Island Natural Park (SINP), a globally significant biodiversity site.

Despite the possible environmental threat, members of the House committee on natural resources have agreed to allocate 20,000 hectares of the 333,515-hectare park for bauxite mining exploration.

"We excised 20,000 hectares for bauxite mining exploration on the conditions that the area should be defined, and that there will be no mining activities outside these," Bunsis Rep. Lawrence Lokeng, committee chair, told the Inquirer in an interview during a hearing of the ...

Miriam may be RP first woman chief justice

JUST BETWEEN US GIRLS. Senators Pilar Juliana Cayetano (center) in the corners and Sen. Manuel Villar ...

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

IF SHE GETS IT, SEN. MIRIAM Defensor-Santiago would be the Philippines' first woman chief justice of the Supreme Court.

The administration senator yesterday confirmed to the Inquirer that she was in the running to replace Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr., who's retiring next month.

"The truth is the President [Macapagal-Arroyo] and I talked about it but I haven't made up my mind," Santiago told the Inquirer.

Another senator has told the Inquirer that Santiago was "interested" in the position.

But Santiago said that when the President called her up, she told her: "I'm interested, but not sure."

She said she was more inclined to consider the position toward the end of her six-year term in 2010.

Santiago said that being only ... nominate her and she gave her consent.

"It would be antecedent of me to [say] it down flat," she said, saying she was willing to have her name presented upon by the Judicial and Bar Council.

Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan, a member of the JBC, which recommends nominees to the President, is reportedly planning to ask for an extension of the deadline for nominations to the high court to accommodate Senate's nominations.

But Santiago said that when the President called her up, she told her: "I'm interested, but not sure."

She said she was more inclined to consider the position toward the end of her six-year term in 2010.

Santiago said that being only ...

Southeast Asia's royals coming

By Nikki Dizon and Jerome Aning

SOUTHEAST ASIA'S ROYALTY WILL grace the 22nd Southeast Asian (SEA) Games beginning this weekend to top the medal tally.

Prince Norodom Sirivudh of Cambodia arrived at around 8 p.m. yesterday on board a chartered flight for a meeting-dinner ...

Scheduled to fly in today at 2:30 p.m. are Brunei's Crown Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah and his wife on board a chartered Airbus A340-200.

Brunei's Prince Haji Bolkiah, who serves as president of the Brunei National Olympic Council, will also arrive today at 2 p.m. on board Malaysian airlines flight MH 794. The departure of the crown prince and the princess has yet to be announced. Prince Haji will stay until Dec. 6.

On Saturday at 5:30 p.m., Princess Sirindhorn of Thailand will arrive on a chartered flight. She will stay until Dec. 4.

Thai Prince Mahe Tejabodingkora will also arrive in a separate plane. The prince will participate in the SEA Games.

While the royalty of Brunei and the princess of Thailand will be coming for the SEA Games, they will arrive on official visits, said Asiad 2005 Manila airport public affairs officer-in-charge ...

The 13-day biennial showpiece officially opens Sunday in Manila at 6:00 p.m. with an opening ceremony to be held at the colorful, 55,000-seat ... suburbs of the ...

SCULPTED athletes, including for the SEAG women's football at the Makiling Sports Complex.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2005

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

FROM WITNESS TO ACCOMPLICE

Subic driver now in hot water

By Jinkers Joaquin and Tonette Orejas
INQ General Luzon Desk

OLONGAPO CITY – THE WITNESS IS NOW AN accomplice.

The driver of the sun in which a 22-year-old Filipino woman was allegedly raped by six US Marines at Subic Bay is now considered an accomplice in the case after he gave contradictory statements and went into hiding.

City Prosecutor Prudencio Jo Imbong and Tetsuro Soriano Jr. were included in the case and were issued a subpoena yesterday because of his behavior since the Nov. 1 incident.

Soriano has 10 days to file a counter-affidavit.

"We decided to consider (Soriano) as a respondent, a principal by indispensable cooperation or an accomplice ... It appears from his declaration made to the media that he is attempting to cover up the case," Imbong said.

"The initial stand is he stopped to rest then went into hiding. He also gave contradictory statements (to investigators) and the medical that he has not formally vomited," Imbong said.

"Parang nilalako na ang kaso (He appears to be peddling the case)."

The subpoena for Soriano was issued the day after the preliminary investigation of the case began on Wednesday. Soriano's lawyers met his lawyer appeared at the hearing.

The complainant and the six US Marines accused of raping her were also absent but were represented by their lawyers.

Soriano's absence was noted after lawyer Francisco Rodrigo Jr., counsel for suspect Chad Brian Carpenter, asked Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority chief investigator Rolando Bautista if he had threatened or harmed the driver to force him to say in his sworn statement that the Americans had "gang-raped" the victim.

Rodrigo raised the question because Soriano later denied to Vice President Noli de Castro in radio program over dyMM that there had been a gang rape.

Torres denied threatening or harming Soriano, saying he considered the driver a vital witness because he "positively identified" the Americans.

"We don't even know where [Soriano] is," Jalandoni said during the hearing.

He said the inconsistencies in Soriano's statement would have to be checked, like his assertion the victim's pants were down to her knees when the Americans carried her from the van.

Witnesses said the woman was clad only in low underwear and a shirt.

"It's also fun to explain why he did not immediately report the incident to authorities," Jalandoni said.

Yesterday, Ben Natividad Jr., the SBMA official from whom Torres said he received a text message initially identifying the six Marines, sought to explain how he arrived at the number of suspects and their names.

Natividad, senior executive assistant and chief of staff of SBMA chair Feliciano Salonga, told the Inquirer he got the Marines' last names from their nametapes after they were ordered to disembark from their ship, the USS Essex, at Subic's Alava Pier the morning of Nov. 3.

"It's not (the SBMA) call if one of a dozen soldiers would be ordered off the ship but I joined their family names when I saw them. I later confirmed the names with United States Embassy people," Natividad said.

Palace media chief wants slice of Bunye's pie

By Sir Cabcabigtot

WELL, YOU CAN'T HELP THEM FROM TRYing.

A Palace official yesterday said Government Media Group chief Cerge Remonde had been pleading with President Macapagal-Arroyo that his turf at Malacañang's communications department be expanded.

The official said Remonde had been lobbying to get at least one of the three positions held by her "media czar" Ignacio Bunye.

Before his designation as overall head of the President's propaganda machine last June, Bunye was at the same time the Presidential Assistant for Communications Director Iñiguez as Malabe. Bunye was at the same time the Presidential spokesperson and her press secretary.

The Palace source said that since Remonde was told that he was unqualified to be the President's spokesperson, the former Cabinet member has since secretly campaigning to have the press secretary portfolio.

Press Undersecretary Robert Rivera tried to squash the claim, saying that Bunye was fully capable of handling all three jobs since they were interrelated. Rivera said he was unaware of talk that Remonde had been actively pursuing the post of press secretary.

In a new carnage in the bayanan, Remonde likely denied being interested in the post. "I have even been wanting to get out of the Communications Department for a long time. I am very, very tired and have long wanted to go back to private media. But I'm staying on for the sake of Madame President," he said.

Wycoco still in coma; prognosis grim

By Margaux C. Deia

GOBERNOR SOMEDAY, THIS WAS HOW doctors described National Bureau of Investigation Director Reynaldo Wycoco's condition yesterday more than 24 hours after he suffered a stroke and slipped into a deep coma.

"He is still in a coma, but his blood pressure and heart rate have improved since he was brought here (on Wednesday)," Dr. Ernie Morales, medical director and cardiologist of the Manila Doctors Hospital, said in a dzBB radio interview.

Morales said medication had brought down and maintained Wycoco's blood pressure at 120 to 130/80 and heart rate at 100 to 110. "He is still dependent on medications to maintain and stabilize his heart rate," Morales added.

He described Wycoco's situation as similar to that of the late Presidente Pro Jr. except that the former presidential candidate "suffered from a blood clot (while Gov. Wycoco had a brain hemorrhage)."

The doctors canceled yesterday's scheduled press conference at 2 p.m. and instead issued a medical bulletin which stated that five neurosurgeons and neurologists "do not find the indications and benefits to do surgical procedure" on Wycoco.

Morales said separate late yesterday afternoon that they had planned to have Wycoco undergo CT scan and cerebrum-cephalography (CEG) but due to "some arrangement details," they decided to postpone the procedure. The EEG or brain wave test is a medical test used to measure electrical activity of the brain.

He said they were also waiting for Wycoco's son Sebastio, who was scheduled to arrive in the country today.

Meanwhile, police duty officer John Dinting the number of visitors allowed to in the intensive care unit.

"We allowed his wife and children to go inside because of the suddenness of the incident," Morales said. "As would be expected, they are depressed and praying hard that something positive would come out of the tests."

Some of Wycoco's men were hopeful that the NBI director would recover soon.

"He is fighting back ... his hands were moving," one of Wycoco's aides said.

Morales said, however, it was not clear if the movement "was spontaneous or a conscious response."

Morales said doctors were continuing to support Wycoco's vital organs until brain function could be evaluated further.

Vice Gerbenson Ace Miguel Aceres, PNP Director General Arturo Lomibao, Transportation and Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza, legal counsel Harriet Demetriou and former intelligence agent Mark "Bearhug" Ong were among visitors allowed into the ICU yesterday.

President Macapagal-Arroyo visited him several hours after he was rushed to the hospital from his office, where he suffered the stroke shortly before 11 a.m. Wednesday. With Delfin Gonzales

Solons, local execs got cut from fertilizer funds, says witness

SOME CONGRESSMEN, GOVERNORS and mayors received millions of pesos in commissions from their shares of the Department of Agriculture's P728-million fertilizer fund before the May 2004 elections.

Jun A. Rabonda Jr., an admitted "runner" at the DA made the declaration in an affidavit he submitted yesterday to the Senate committee on agriculture and food.

Rabonda, assisted by former Senate President Jovito Salonga, showed up toward the end of the hearing. He was asked to swear to his affidavit, but did not testify for lack of time.

He would testify at the resumption of the inquiry in January said Sen. Ramon Magsaysay Jr., committee chair.

In his affidavit, Rabonda said he was asked by a Mexican agency in January 2004 to "sell" liquid fertilizer to local government officials using the DA funds.

The fertilizer was supplied by Bicolan Philippines Inc., which he said was connected to former Agriculture Undersecretary Jocelyn "Joc Joc" Bolante.

Rabonda said he and Agency approached congressmen, governors and mayors to inform them there was a DA fund available to them for the purchase of fertilizer, and that they would get a 30-percent commission from the fund.

Rabonda said he himself delivered the commissions to certain officials in Bicolandia, Aklan, Guimaras and other places.

Bolante, the government official who allegedly managed the fertilizer fund suspected of having been diverted to the election campaign of Western Mindanao-based dewars, grabbed the inquiry room ...

He lawyer, Antonio Zobarte, said Bolante was still abroad.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson said Bolante was over the weekend with Pres Gloria Macapagal Arroyo in Hong Kong, where the First Family flew after the President attended the Apec summit in South Korea.

"The story they talked about the fertilizer scam. I have my source (that they are)," Lacson said.

Bolante flew from the United States to meet with Mr. Arroyo, and then back after their meeting, according to the senator. With Purposio

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Mark Jimenez still in prison, will be released on Dec. 13, says DFA

THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN Affairs yesterday confirmed that United States envoy and former Manila congressman Mark Jimenez was still in jail in the US and will not be released until Dec. 13.

But DFA spokesperson Ian Araque said the department had "no comment on the reasons" why Jimenez's release was "postponed."

In a 5 p.m. briefing, Araque said that based on the report of Cecilia Soberg, Philippine consul general in New York, Jimenez was still being held at the Allenwood Federal Correctional Institute in Montgomeries.

An ABS-CBN report quoting another Philippine consul, Lourdes Legaspi, as saying Jimenez was prevented from leaving the US facility after committing an "infraction" in prison.

Legaspi did not say what exactly the infraction was, according to the report.

The DFA pronouncements in effect belied statements made in Manila by relatives of Jimenez, Representative del Mar Roy. Prospero Pichay, that the controversial businessman was just "taking his own sweet time" as in his return to the country.

Jimenez served a 30-month jail sentence for tax fraud and illegal campaign contributions.

If someone lied, let God be the judge, bishop tells flock

RIDICULED: Lies on her position.

From page A1

Angel Lagdameo, has been reported as saying Gen. Jose would be no observer in the controversy triggered by the "Hello Garci" tapes if the administration would not address it squarely.

Lagdameo had earlier said the attempt of the Senate to impeach Mr. Arroyo was foiled mainly by "ridiculous" panel by administration lawmakers. He had also condemned the subsequent violent dispersal of anti-Arroyo rallies.

"Let us be positive; let us stress what good the people do," Reuters said. "Let us unite. Let us not be paralyzed by deceit that others do."

Detached approach

Mr. Arroyo has been accused of mocking last year's presidential election and lying about it. She has since apologized for the "lapses in judgment" of calling then Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano, but has denied any wrongdoing.

Shortly after Mr. Arroyo apologized on national TV on June 27, Reuters issued a pastoral statement saying forgiveness should not be divorced from accountability.

But since then, the archbishop has maintained a detached approach to the issue.

He kept mum while police were clubbing and hosing down protesters in Manila, his pastoral jurisdiction. When he did speak, he said the authorities were justified in using a water cannon to disperse a prayer rally led by three of his fellow bishops.

Asked yesterday if Mr. Arroyo's resignation would end the political crisis, Reuters said: "It won't end, before me, [problems] have been there since the time of Cain and Abel. That's why people should go to Jesus Christ, because He can put an end to all of them."

Reuters has kept away from public views fostering turmoil on issuing unprovoked communists and propounding "Pinoy ng Pinoy," a poverty-alleviation program of the Church.

Cold shoulder

Speaking of leaving judgments to the Lord, the cold for a Church-sponsored breakfast prayer meeting between the President and her political enemies has elected the cold shoulder from opposition senators.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr., a vocal critic of The Prosecutor, said in a text message: "I don't think [the organizers] still need me because their prayers may sound disingenuous to me. I still want Gloria out.

"VINA needs all the prayers she can get. The question is, will God hear the prayers? Unfortunately, only she can answer that."

But Pimentel conceded that the planned prayer meeting was "not a bad idea."

Sen. Rodolfo Lacson said he was not keen on attending the annual Philippine National Prayer Breakfast at the Manila Hotel on Dec. 7, stressing that Mr. Arroyo had to first address lingering doubts about the legitimacy of her presidency.

"We have to resolve first a lot of issues before we speak of reconciliation or whatever. We have to clear things up," he told reporters in his Makati City office, trying, among others, the "Hello Garci" scandal.

The Philippine National Prayer Breakfast Group held its first prayer meeting last year last December after the prayer meeting would bridge the divide between Ms. Arroyo and her critics.

Sincerity

The other seeks "to touch the hearts and minds" of national leaders "for God and for the good of all the people," Dionne Reyes-Jimenez, executive director of the foundation, had said earlier.

But Lacson said he doubted the President would be sincere in reconciling forces with the opposition.

"We agree to a dialogue, and then her smack dogs will be very busy smacking us. Where's the genuine reconciliation?" Lacson said.

He claimed that Malacañang was poised to ram the tables on the opposition with the re-jected results of Hello Garci.

"For instance, what [is Malacañang] planning to launch a southern trade against the opposition? What benefited from the elections? It was [the] Ayalas. This was proven by the 85th [electoral returns], CDCs [certificates of canvass] and several commissions," he said.

Some members of the opposition have raised the suspicion that Hello Garci would draw himself and Ms. Arroyo of conspiring to rig the 2004 polls, and instead link the opposition to electoral fraud.

But Senate Majority Floor Leader Francis Pangilinan—who was among those who had called for Ms. Arroyo's resignation—may open to the prayer meeting.

"I see nothing wrong with people from opposing sides of the political fence coming together to pray for our nation and our people. I really wish that what we do pray we—do so for the sake of the nation and not for ... selfish ends," he said in a text message. With reports from TJ Burgonio and Christina Mendoza

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CONSERVATIVE group want this David statue, a replica of Michaelangelo's 15th-century masterpiece, arrested on the boardwalk of Dasoo City removed for having a double crossing as it is near a crucifix.

Miriam may ...

From page A1

60 years old, she would have to serve as the high court for the next 14 years, or until the latter 70, the mandatory retirement age for justices of the court.

In that case, she said the chief justice position would be a "shoulder job" for her.

"Of course, I find it attractive but I just cannot see myself sitting as chief justice ... sitting as tax-payer, surrounded by books. I'll be bored out of my skull," said the outspoken senator.

Obstacle

Santiago said she was also concerned about her moral obligation to the voters who elected her to the Senate as well as the opportunity for an incumbent associate justice to become the chief justice.

"I don't want to serve as an obstacle for the professional journals that are due the other justices," she said, adding that younger associate justices who have been in the high court a long time expect to at least be given the chance to be appointed to the top.

Santiago said other precedents in the past had allowed her the position but she had unreservedly declined it.

Santiago said there was no obstacle to the appointment of an outsider like herself as chief justice of the Supreme Court.

Second term

Now on her second term as a senator, Santiago is a graduate of the University of the Philippines College of Law and served as a regional trial court judge in Quezon City. She served as agrarian reform secretary and commissioner of the Bureau of Immigration and nearly won the presidential election in 1992.

SC affirms sequestration of Bulletin shares

By Rotsand N. Macatil

THE SUPREME COURT HAS AFFIRMED A Sandiganbayan ruling forfeiting in favor of government the shares owned by businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco Jr. in the Manila Bulletin newspaper, which the anti-graft court declared was part of the ill-gotten wealth of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

In a unanimous en banc decision written by Justice Jose C. Vitug, the high court also denied three petitions challenging the March 14, 2002 Sandiganbayan ruling.

In the 2002 ruling, the Sandiganbayan declared as "ill-gotten" the 40,628 Bulletin shares of Cojuangco and 200,852.5 shares in the names of Jose T. Campos, Cojuangco and Lucio Tan—which had been sequestered by the Bulletin management for P500,000.

The two blocks of shares were sold back to the Bulletin on Feb. 21, 1986 for P10.50 each. The proceeds from the sale were deposited in a bank and frozen by the PCGG.

It was then some P9 0.28 million, including interest, that was ordered forfeited by the court in favor of government.

The SC also affirmed the Sandiganbayan decision declaring as "not ill-gotten" all other Bulletin shares, including the 54,472 shares sold by the late Joaquin M. Elizalde to the Hi Antibiotics Co. on May 31, 1986 since the sale was valid and legal.

Also affirmed as "not ill-gotten" were the 2,637 shares held by Bulletin chief Emilio Yap and the "1 Bulletin Share" in the name of the estate of Alois W. Weisz. These latter two blocks of shares were part of the master inventor of the Bulletin's founder and owner Carson Taylor but Sherak had bought in 1957.

These petitions were filed with the Supreme Court assailing the 2002 decision of the Sandiganbayan.

Cojuangco challenged the decision declaring as ill-gotten the 40,628 shares in his name and the 190,852.5 shares in his and the names of Campos and Espinosa.

The SC said the Sandiganbayan was right in ruling that "Campos, Cojuangco and Espinosa were nominees and dummies of Marcos, hence the 190,852.5 shares which these nominees transferred to HMMRI and which, in turn, were sold to the Bulletin are ill-gotten wealth."

It said the Sandiganbayan correctly found that the shares in the name of Cojuangco were owned by the Marcoses and not by Cojuangco as a nominee of Marcos.

Cojuangco claimed that he had acquired the Bulletin shares not as a Marcos dummy but as a nominee of Meralco.

But the high court said he did not present any evidence to substantiate his claim.

Peasant leader protests ouster from Cocobank

By Alcuin Papa

A PEASANT LEADER YESTERDAY PROTESTed his ouster from the board of the United Coconut Planters Bank even as farmers' organizations alleged that the move prompted a planned compromise deal between the Presidential Commission on Good Government and businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco.

Nic Fabi, chair of the Pambansang Kilusan ng mga Samahang Magsasaka (Pakisama) based in Quezon province, was replaced as UCPB board director by Melendrio Aun, a member of new PCGG chair Camilo Sabio.

Aun announced on June 16 the appointment of three new UCPB directors to replace Fabi and two others who are all identified with Sabio's predecessor, the late Haydee Yorac.

The other board members who were replaced were Jose Ma. Sison, executive director of the Coconut Industry Reform Movement (CIRM) and Philippine Peasant Institute executive director Nestor Bejasa; Fabi. Sison was replaced by Ezra Mae Andong and Bejasa by Oscar Avichelle.

The three were requested to hand in their resignation at the UCPB board meeting today.

But Fabi protested that he was deprived of his rights as a stockholders' meeting elects a new set of officers.

"However, there is no scheduled stockholders meeting yet. Usually this is held every three years," he said.

Fabi said he and his lawyers are studying the option filing a complaint over his removal.

OUT OF GMA'S HANDS

Senators agree to transfer intel funds to intel agencies

By John Laboy Jaraliena

A SENATOR-CHOLO OF SENADORS HAS reached an agreement to transfer President Macapagal-Arroyo's intelligence funds to the intelligence agencies of the police and military, Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. claimed yesterday.

Pimentel said the standoff ended after senators that the intelligence funds, amounting to P600 million, under the control of the Office of the President, should be placed where they are properly belong"— the Armed Forces, the Philippine National Police, the National Bureau of Investigation and the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency.

The bill states that the entire P1.2 billion in government intelligence funds will be in the hands of the military and the police.

Senate President Franklin Drilon said the senators who attended the caucus were "receptive" to the idea of depriving the President of the intelligence funds but that a formal floater position would not be reached until the House submits the 2006 budget bill to the Senate in January.

"Personally I am in favor of this but I cannot say that a majority of the senators are in favor of it already. I think we will have to wait for the budget from the House," Drilon said.

Pimentel said it was time to put a stop to the controversy surrounding the use of the government's P1.3 billion intelligence funds in the Office of the President while the law enforcement agencies perennially complain of inadequate funds for intelligence gathering.

He said the huge intelligence funds, which are not subject to audit, is to dispersal could easily tempt those among us to use the money for partisan political activities.

Pimentel said the senators concurred with the idea of transferring the President's intelligence funds to the AFP and the PNP because they are the ones principally in charge of gathering intelligence.

But he said the President can still realign the funds even if these are transferred by Congress.

Senators questioned Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita about the P600 million intelligence funds of the Office of the President during the hearing on Malacañang's proposed P1.1 billion budget for next year.

Sen. Rodolfo Biazon said Dir. OPs budget for intelligence was twice more than the combined intelligence funds of the AFP and PNP combined. He said the AFP is allotted P111 million while the PNP has about P276 million, out of a total P501 million.

Biazon said of the P600 million, only P100 million goes to the AFP while P500 million goes to the Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Task Force.

Biazon said he is in favor of the transfer of the OP intelligence funds to the AFP and PNP but he said it is time to review their secret funds which are not subject to regular audit but are classified by Malacañang as part of the intelligence funds.

Senate prefers Con-com to Con-Ass

By John Laboy Jaraliena

THE SENATE WILL NOT JOIN THE CHAR-CHANGE moves that is set to be approved by the House of Representatives, Senate President Franklin Drilon said yesterday.

But Drilon reiterated that majority of the 23 senators are not in favor of amending the 1987 Constitution through People's Initiative, saying that the Senate and House members themselves, which is the mode espoused by the House.

He also warned the House that it cannot proceed with charter change without the participation and concurrence of the Senate.

Drilon said senators don't want a constituent assembly, recalling that at least 14 senators have signed a resolution calling for a constituent convention composed of elected delegates.

"Let me reiterate our position. We are not against Charter Change per se. We believe the 1987 Constitution is not perfect, and can stand some improvement," Drilon said.

Drilon made the statement to allay fears from the House that the Senate will scuttle electoral) push its resolution calling for a constituent assembly to change the form of government from presidential to parliamentary. He also gave the same assurance to the presidential Consultations Commission, whose recommendations also with the House position.

MESSAGES

PHILIPPINE ACADEMY OF MEDICAL SPECIALISTS

PAMS: Making A Difference

11th Academy Meeting 2005 Annual Convention November 27, 28 & 29, 2005
Crowne Plaza Galleria Manila, Ortigas Avenue corner ADB Avenue, Quezon City

Program of Activities

Convention Proper

Day 1 Sunday, November 27
Pre-Convention Activities
8:00 AM - 2:00 PM
4th PAMS President's Cup Golf Tournament
Registration
Badminton Tournament
2:00 PM Registration (Couples Fiesta)
5:00 PM Bowling Tournament

Day 2 Monday, November 28
7:00 AM Registration
8:00 AM Thanksgiving Mass
10:00 AM - 1:00 PM
Sanofi-Aventis Luncheon Symposium
"Optimizing Management of Hypertensive Emergencies"
1:00-1:30 PM
"GMA Hospital Support Program: What's it all About?"

Day 3 Tuesday, November 29
8:00 AM - 12:00 NN
Simultaneous Scientific Lectures per specialty
1:00 PM - 4:00 PM
Conference Ceremonies for Fellows
Induction of Newly Elected Officers
Incoming Address
Closing Ceremony

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2005 EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

BOARD of TRUSTEES

2005 CHAPTER PRESIDENTS

Peso rallies to 54.17 vs dollar

Front page B1

Traders said that after the peso broke the 54.20 barrier yesterday, it gave up some gains as the forex exchange rate attracted buyers, in turn affecting the strong inflow from overseas Filipino workers.

The demand for dollars came from companies with debt payment and import requirements, which found buying opportunities at levels below 54.25 to the dollar, the traders said.

Too fast, too soon

Some banks also reserved their short positions on the dollar, thus slowing down the peso's ascent.

"Some traders probably think that a fall that's too fast and too soon is not good," a trader with a bank here said.

But even as the peso hauled flat at 54.30, it was still trading at a six-month high since ending at 54.20 on May 15.

The currency yesterday moved between 54.17 and 54.32 against the greenback and averaged 54.259 compared with the previous session's average of 54.338.

Still on uptrend

The volume of dollars traded amounted to $547 million, down from Wednesday's $687.7 million.

The peso is still on an uptrend although the local currency may succumb to profit-taking from time to time, dealers said.

The peso is expected to trade between 54.18 and 54.40 against the greenback today.

"Technically, the dollar is still here and there. There's no strong signal yet to continue selling," another trader said.

The peso's true correlation is the Japanese yen compared with other Asian currencies just left a sixth less demandable stab if the yen's slide against the dollar continued, according to Johnson.

High interest rates

Analysts say high interest rates have waned demand for Philippine assets in a market thirsting for yield.

Jallorina said the peso could head for levels around 54per dollar unless the authorities intervened to cap the currency.

"There is room for more gains. The only real barrier at this juncture could be the central bank, if they think it has gone too far," he said.

At the secondary market for Philippine treasury bonds, yields were lower on ample liquidity and positive sentiments spurred by recent improvement in the government's fiscal performance.

The five-year T-bond yield was quoted at 10.259 percent compared with Wednesday's 10.379 percent. With a report from Reuters

ASIA'S BEST PERFORMER. the peso is now at its highest level since May 15, thanks to remittances from OFWs and the country's improving fiscal position. INQ file

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Oct. 12, 2006	Nov. 9, 2006	Dec. 7, 2006
Oct. 19, 2006	Nov. 16, 2006	Dec. 17, 2006

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The WORLD

Cito Lorente B. Cueva

UK warns media on Jazeera 'plot'

LONDON—BRITAIN HAS WARNED MEDIA OR-ganizations they are breaking the law if they publish details of a leaked document said to show US President George W. Bush wanted to bomb Arabic television station al-Jazeera.

The government's top lawyer warned editors in a note after the Daily Mirror newspaper reported on Tuesday that a secret British government memo said Prime Minister Tony Blair had talked Bush out of bombing the broadcaster in April last year.

Several British newspapers reported the attorney general's note on Wednesday and repeated the Mirror's allegations, which the Mirror House said were "so outlandish" they did not merit a response. Blair's office declined to comment.

Al-Jazeera, which has repeatedly denied US accusations it aides with insurgents in Iraq, called on Britain and the United States to state quickly whether the report was untrue.

"If the request to correct their lies would be both shocking and reactionist, not only to al-Jazeera but to media organizations across the world," the Qatar-based station said in a statement.

The story would also be a shock for Qatar, a small Gulf state which cultivates good relations with Washington.

Reporters' rights groups asked on the United States and Britain to promptly give clarification of the report.

"This is a very serious charge with grave implications for the safety of media professionals," said Joel Cooper, executive director of the Committee to Protect Journalists. "Refusing to address these reports is a substantive way only Fuels suspicions."

Reporters Without Borders said: "We find it hard to believe that President Bush really discussed this possibility. We would be extremely anxious and would consider it a major and unprecedented escalation of the right to information.

"If the report had not in fact been, it offers a new insight into the tensions of the US forces, which have already bombed al-Jazeera offices twice, in Afghanistan and Iraq."

The Mirror said the memo came from Blair's foreign policy adviser and quoted what it said was a record of Tony Clarke, then a member of parliament for the town of Northampton. Clarke handed the document back to the government.

Lord Goldsmith, who used to work for Clarke, said: «It is untrue. Harriet Baugh were changed last Thursday under Britain's Official Secrets Act with making a "damaging disclosure" of a document relating to international relations."

The Mirror said Bush told Blair in a White House summit on April 16 but just that he wanted to target al-Jazeera. The summit took place in US Crawford in Iraq war's launching a major assault on the Iraqi insurgent stronghold Fallujah.

The paper quoted an unnamed government official suggesting Bush's threat was a joke but added another unidentified source saying the US president was serious.

Prime Minister Tony Blair's spokesperson Jean McClellan said: "We are not interested in dignifying something as outlandish and inconceivable with a response." *Reuters*

HISHIMA BEFORE 'SEPUKOU'

This May 28, 1970 picture shows Japanese author Yukio Mishima speaking before Japanese Self-Defense Force soldiers at Tokyo's military garrison station. Nov 25, 2005 marks the 35th anniversary of when Mishima sliced open his own stomach in a ritual "seppuku" disembowelment suicide after delivering a speech from the balcony. AFP

Australia faces worker shortfall due to aging

CANBERRA—AUSTRALIA TOLD labor market will be unemployment even further by a marked downturn in growth in the working-age population that could exacerbate skill shortages in coming years, a government report said on Thursday.

The report from the employment ministry, at a time when the government is struggling to win control for labor market reforms, said there could be a shortfall of 195,000 workers over the next five years as a result of the aging population.

"In the population ages, skills shortages could become even more acute, particularly in industries where there is already a high proportion of older workers," said the report, titled Australian Jobs.

The unemployment rate hit a 28-year low of 5.0 percent in the middle of the year and now stands at 5.2 percent. The labor market tightness has led to a shortage of workers in areas such as mining, engineering, health and accounting.

The report said the number of people employed hit a record high of more than 10 million in July 2005.

Australia's central bank has identified shortages of labor as an concern that could prompt it to raise interest rates if stimulate wages growth. Reuters *(see also Australia...)*

Chemical blast pollutes major river in China

HARBIN, CHINA—A CHEMICAL plant explosion has severely polluted one of China's biggest rivers, the government said Wednesday, causing water supplies for the millions of people and spawning pollution fears in neighboring Russia.

The explosion at a Petrochina factory in the northeastern province of Jilin led to an outpouring of the carcinogen benzene into the Sun. 1,200 kilometers long Songhua river, the fifth-largest river in China's northeast.

Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA) said.

"After the blast at the chemical plant the monitoring station in Jilin United that benzene went into the river and polluted the water," the SEPA said in a statement on its website.

"Benzene levels were 100 times above national safety levels."

The announcement came 10 days after the Nov. 13 explosion and followed repeated denials from government officials that there had been any major environmental impact.

In Harbin, the capital of neighboring Heilongjiang province almost 300 kilometers downstream from the explosion, residents and authorities were cut off as midnight on Tuesday over the pollution from the local government said.

The disruption in the main source of drinking water by more than three million urban residents of Harbin, which has a total population of about nine million and is one of China's biggest cities.

The SPA said the pollutants in the water were expected to hit Harbin around 6 a.m. on Thursday, although the contaminants would be diluted.

Xinhua news agency quoted government sources as saying that Harbin needs 1,000 tons of active carbon to purify the contaminated water in the Songhua but is currently 700 tons short. AFP

Korean stem cell pioneer says sorry for ethics lapses

SEOUL, SOUTH KO-rean cloning pioneer Hwang Woo-suk resigned his official post Thursday in order to take responsibility for ethical violations by his team during landmark research to create the first cloned human embryos.

Hwang said that researchers in his team had cloned three cell eggs without his permission and that other women were paid for eggs used in his breakthrough project, also without his knowledge.

Hwang, a Korean national hero and the first man to clone a human embryo, admitted that he had lied when official questions began to surface last year about the origin of the supply of human eggs available to his researchers.

"I feel so sorry to speak about such shameful and unavoidable things to you people," he told a press conference held in his office, his comments on a scandal that has been brewing for months.

"I again sincerely apologize for

HWANG

having caused concern at home and abroad."

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"I again sincerely apologize for having caused concern at home and abroad."

Hwang said he was resigning all official posts Thursday in order to take responsibility for ethical violations by his team during landmark research to create the first cloned human embryos.

But Hwang said he would continue his own trailblazing research and retained the backing of the government, which earlier Thursday said he had done nothing wrong.

"There were no breaches of legal or ethical standards in the course of obtaining human eggs," Science and Technology Vice spokesperson for the Ministry of Health Lund Whitbee.

Hwang and his team in February 2004 announced the first ever cloning of human embryos, which could lead to the creation of "super" embryonic stem cells. This year they unveiled the world's first cloned dog. AFP

Poisoned river shows dark side of China's boom

By Emma Graham-Harrison

BEIJING—AS OIL-SOAKED WORKers clothes pumped now and queues of residents waited for safe water in the northern Chinese city, top leaders met in Beijing to discuss tackling the country's "grave" environmental woes.

Years of pioneering economic growth at almost any price, both in battles poverty and create the stability the Communist Party believes will help it stay in power, have sent environmental conditions plunging even as living standards soar.

Harbin's troubles were caused by an explosion at a petrochemical plant up river, which spilt carcinogenic toxins into the water, but is symptomatic of wider problems.

China's water is dirty or unsafe to drink—70 percent of its rivers are contaminated, over a third of the country is plagued by acid rain, and in the past 50 years it has lost more than 1,000 lakes, like official Xinhua agency says.

Its water are choked too. Home to seven of the world's 10 most polluted cities, its urban smog causes over 400,000 early deaths a year, the International Energy Agency says.

Factory and power stations often ignore environmental rules in the haste for profits or under-done, pumping effluent into rivers or lakes, while cars choke cities. Its equipment is often outdated, some times lower it ensured to cut costs.

Others run equipment for too long, risking accidents from lax worn wear or following maintenance.

This may be particularly tempting in the petrochemical sector, which supplies the building blocks of everything from fertilizers to drugs, and is racing to keep up with demand.

Reports are high and multiple record fines like Germany's BASF are pouring billions of dollars in to Chinese plants.

The Chinese sector has to mandate to follow suit and they argue that these are comparable to international levels," said analyst Victor Shum of Patrick & Co in Singapore.

"I think this is true, but the question is how closely are is daily-to-day basis you follow these rules. Where you're under a lot of pressure there may be a temptation to cut corners." *Reuters*

'Iron Lady' Africa's first elected woman president

MONROVIA—Liberia's "Iron Lady" former Harvard Minister Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, became Africa's first elected woman head of state on Wednesday, promising to stamp out corruption and rebuild her shattered country.

Liberia's electoral commission declared the Harvard-trained economist winner of a bitter presidential runoff after the count almost 60 percent of the valid votes, beating soccer millionaire George Weah's 40 percent.

"The election of Africa's first democratically elected female president is historic ... I promise that I will conduct myself and the affairs of the country in a manner that brings pride to the women of Liberia, Africa and even the world," Johnson-Sirleaf said in comments broadcast live on radio.

"The election marks the end of an era. An era of political and social confusion. We will create and facilitate an inclusive government, I promise you that," said the 67 year-old president-elect, dressed in a red-and-African robe and headwrap.

Hundreds of cheering, singing and dancing supporters of the victorious Liberian call "Iron Lady"

SIRLEAF

and "Mama Ellen" celebrated outside Johnson-Sirleaf's home and the headquarters of her Unity Party, bringing traffic to a standstill.

"Mama Ellen ... is now the president. I'm happy," said 38-year-old Amos Bropple, wearing a t-shirt with the country's first woman president's campaign posters.

Liberia's electoral authorities confirmed Johnson-Sirleaf's win by a wide margin even though they were still investigating a limited complaint from Weah, 39, that the polls were fraudulent.

Supporters of the former AC Milan striker, who has a strong following among mostly young Liberians, staged street protests last week, some of which turned into clashes with looters.

International observers had praised the elections, the first since the end of a 14-year civil war in the West African state, as free, fair and peaceful. About 15,000 United Nations troops and police supervised the polls.

Weah's Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) party said it would continue to contest the election result. Reuters

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2005

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

SPORTS

WATER POLO

Ricardo Dilapidag (#1) of the Philippines gets ready to score against the Vietnamese while Almozi Laurel (#2) prepares to provide support at the Town College in Los Baños, Laguna. The Philippine team won (13-3). Story on page 28

TODAY'S SCHEDULE

MEN'S FOOTBALL

(Town Stadium, Arnedo City)

4:30 p.m. — Cambodia vs Philippines

RP XI tries again vs Cambodia

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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US gays, liberals to battle Vatican edict

BOSTON — Gay rights activists and Liberal Catholics picked on Wednesday for a long battle over the Vatican's tougher stance on homosexuality, predicting the Church would lose thousands of followers in the United States.

The policy drafted to deal with scandals over pedophile priests rose original in Boston in 2002 and spread across the United States, says the Church can admit those who have chosen freely even homosexual tendencies for or less than vows.

But practicing homosexuals and those who support a gay culture should be barred, it said. Conservatives in the Roman Catholic Church and in other religions welcomed the edict.

"We are calling on all Catholics of good will to speak to their pastors and to express their outrage at this decision," said Barry Knox, a director of Human Rights Campaign, a gay rights group based in Washington.

"But I seek to speak over the heads of the Pope to Catholics in the pews to urge them to take into consideration what Jesus would do if he saw the neighbor being treated in this way," said Knox. "Jesus would never act like this."

The Catholic Church would lose thousands of future priests to De United States, while those who remain will lose its trust of which bishop," said Marianne Duddy-Burke of gay and lesbian Catholic group Dignity USA in Boston.

"A number of good, holy gay priests will probably quietly slip away from their call, ing for one of the clergy sexual."

That is mostly what many conservatives in the Catholic say should have happened long ago. They laud the 22-paragraph Vatican document as wondering a standing policy that priests believe has not been properly enforced.

"This is not just about homosexuality or homosexual acts—it's about an agenda and subculture that is in direct conflict with the teachings of the Catholic Church," said Michael Rose, author of "Goodbye, Good Men: How Liberals Brought Corruption Into the Catholic Church."

Other strong conservative Catholics, like Robert Bidal, senior editor of the Catholic journal Crisis, tore a New York lawmaker homosexuality and the scandal over pedophile priests.

"That was not a homosexual scandal. It was a pedophile scandal. There's significant difference that there was some kind of same-sex element to it," he said. "Bottom line, to look at all the issues, we're addressing that now."

Underpinning the country is a 2000 survey by John Jay College of Criminal Justice which found that of 10,667 people abused by priests between 1950 and 2002, 81 percent were males.

Gay rights advocates said the Church was turning gay men into scapegoats for pedophiles and should address deeper failings than silenced. Us bishops to move priests known to have abused minors from parish to parish instead of defrocking them or reporting them to authorities.

Daniel Shipulski, a spokesman of moral theology at Marquette, a Jesuit university in Wisconsin, said the Church's underlying problem is its policy of infallibility on sexuality and how this is interpreted as meaning not getting married.

"Many gay seminarians who weren't planning on getting married before were drawn toward the priesthood but not necessarily drawn toward a 'sacred life,'" he said, adding that the new policy "will lead to a tremendous amount of disruption and a 'don't ask, don't tell' kind of response."

Implementing it and defining "deep-seated gay tendencies" will prove tough to do, said Donald Cozzens of John Carroll University in Cleveland and author of "The Changing Face of the Priesthood: A Reflection on the Priest's Crisis of Soul."

"It's possible the vocations issue will deepen," he said.

That would come as an alarming hint for the US Catholic Church, whose bishops expressed "deep concern" over border fighting between Lebanon's Hezbollah guerrillas and Israeli forces.

Six Syrian Hezbollah guerrillas on Monday raided northern Israel in an unsuccessful attempt to capture Israeli troops, triggering the worst round of fighting since Israel pulled out of south Lebanon five years ago. Four Hezbollah fighters were killed, in addition to injuries on both sides.

AFP, Reuters

POPE Brenedict XVI greeting pilgrims during his weekly audience in Saint Peter's Square in the Vatican Mar. 21

Israeli hang-glider lands into Lebanon

BEIRUT — (REUTERS/AFP) GLIDER fell into Lebanese territory along the border with Israel on Wednesday, provoking a gunbattle between Hezbollah and Israeli forces, Israeli and Lebanese sources said.

An Israeli military source said the hang-glider was rescued from the Lebanese area before being blown off course by strong winds before managing to get back into Israel under covering fire from the Israeli Army.

The Lebanese Shiite Muslim militant group Hezbollah said he was a soldier, but Israeli military sources insisted he was a civilian.

"He landed just inside the border fence, several metres away from it. Israeli soldiers then went to help him get back to safety," said the Israeli source, denying that its forces entered southern Lebanon.

Other Israeli security sources, however, said that Israeli troops had briefly crossed the border to help the man escape. Hezbollah fighters took refuge to the east.

The hang-glider landed in northern on his return to Israel and was immediately arrested by soldiers on a base on taking off from a cliff near the border Israeli police said.

They said he would be charged with endangering the lives of Israeli soldiers and civilians by his reckless behaviour in a military area.

A report on the website of the opposing Israeli daily 'Haaretz' Aluminum said troops had just managed to save the man from being kidnapped by Hezbollah guerrillas on the Lebanese side.

Meanwhile, the UN Security Council, after three days of deliberation, on Wednesday expressed "deep concern" over border fighting between Lebanon's Hezbollah guerrillas and Israeli forces.

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AFP, Reuters

Council of Europe opens probe of CIA prisoner flights

STRASBOURG — THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE said Wednesday it was opening a probe into reported flights that US intelligence and European airports were using as suspected terrorists held secretly outside US territory.

The year European body's secretary general, Terry Davis, announced "a formal inquiry into recent reports suggesting that terrorist suspects may have been secretly detained in or transported through a number of ... member states with the possible involvement of foreign agencies."

The Council's member states would have until Feb. 21 next year to provide information to the inquiry Davis said in a written statement.

The inquiry would look at governments' compliance with European human rights law and whether officials had been involved in "unacknowledged" detentions or transport of detainees, including "of the complicity of any foreign agency," the statement said.

Press reports have said Washington's Central Intelligence Agency has operated secret detention facilities in countries Europe, Afghanistan, Thailand and elsewhere in order to circumvent US laws protecting detainees, particularly restrictions on the use of torture.

Prime allegedly operated by the CIA have been spotted at airports in Poland, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Bosnia, Syria and Sweden as well as Britain.

Britain, the current chair of the European Union, said Tuesday that following requests from several member states it would expand discussions with Washington on allegations that the CIA had held terrorist suspects in Europe.

The Council of Europe's parliamentary assembly had already announced a probe into reports of the CIA operating clandestine detention facilities in more European countries.

The new probe announced Wednesday came amid a flurry of fresh reports on alleged secret flights.

In Vienna, American Air Force chief Erich Pfeiffer confirmed that a Hercules aircraft suspected of transporting prisoners for the CIA had flown through Austrian airspace in 2000.

The aircraft's owners, Tepper Aviation, has insisted the flight was not from one.

In Lisbon, Focus magazine published photographs taken by an amateur sleuth showing what the magazine said were CIA planes linked to the kidnapping of Iraqi scientist studying weapons of Portuguese airports in Shortland May.

The magazine said one of the planes had touched down at Faro airport near Lisbon while the other three landed in Portugal's mid-Atlantic Azores archipelago where the United States has a military base.

AFP

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RP XI tries again vs Cambodia

From page 1

BACOLOD CITY—ITCHING BY A HEADY breaking loose in its debut, the Philippine men's football team hopes to step in the turf for a first-ever Southeast Asian Games medal when it takes on Cambodia today at the Panaad Stadium.

Brushing the form rarely seen in games, the RP boosters put up a gallant fight against defending champion Thailand only to lose, 1-0, Wednesday, leaving them with no recourse but to win their next two matches.

Camarines is set at 4:30 p.m. with another huge crowd expected to flock at the stadium to support the Filipinos, who are heavily favored to claim victory and eventually end a 10-year win drought in the Games.

"The players are eager to win," said RP coach Aris Caslib, whose team also needs to prevail against Malaysia on Sun. Do-or-lose is their chance of making it to the knockout stages. "They know that they are now playing in a higher level."

The Cambodian boosters hosted to Malaysia, 9-0, in their first match but Caslib is not taking their rivals lightly.

"I'm stressing the importance of discipline in defense to them [the players]," he said. "They (Cambodians) will come out more aggressive so we just have to find ways to stop them and work hard for the win," he said.

Caslib did not say if he would still have the same starting 11 against Cambodia but hinted there would only be little adjustments on their part.

Hilarion brothers Phil and James Younghusband played key roles against Thailand, setting up most of RP's scoring opportunities but they would be needing more support from reinforcements.

Head-to-head, the Philippines had never won against Cambodia. The RP boosters came close to snatching a victory in the 1998 Tiger Cup, fighting the Cambodians to a 1-all draw.

The RP boosters are expected to robustly trash Cambodian strikers Sosoth Solemani, Penh Vivek and Pok Chan Thon.

Philippine Football Federation president Johnny Romualdez said "although the Nationals are dipped to win the match, the team still needs to play hard from start to finish."

He also advised football fans here to bring Philippine flags and wear blue—the Filipinos' jersey color—again today.

Cadaff Tapon, PIA Visayas Bureau

Thai girls foil debut of Filipino footballers

THAILAND EXTENDED TO BEA THORN TO the Philippines' football bid.

A day after its men's team dipped the Philippine squad in Bacolod, the Thai women footballers' star (Chanpeng) in the 40th minute scored the goal that proved to be the difference just 12 minutes after entering the pitch.

The win lifted the Thais record up to 3-0, putting them in a share of the lead with Myanmar which crushed Indonesia, 5-0, in the earlier game.

Thailand also clobbered over a 1-0 victory over the Philippines Wednesday in Bacolod.

And just like the men's team, the women's squad put up a gallant fight, much to the delight of an 8,000-strong crowd that came clad in red and white—the colors of the Philippine team uniform.

The Thais then marked a disappointing defeat for the Filipinos, which managed to create a lot of scoring opportunities.

"Coming in, we were confident that we could beat the Thais," said striker Marielle Benitez. "But we underperformed."

"We're disappointed," added the RP skipper. "But we have to move on and look forward to our next game."

"This is a definitely a setback that will affect us," echoed RP assistant coach Freddie Muyco Jr.

The Philippines will play Indonesia on Saturday, followed by matches against Vietnam and Myanmar on Nov. 26 and 30, respectively. *Jose Noah Cuaderno, contributor*

Vietnam booters reach semis first

BACOLOD CITY—VIETNAM clinched the first semifinal berth in Group B with a 4-game to open, nipping Myanmar, 1-0, in the 23rd Southeast Asian Games men's football tournament at the Bacolod City Sports Complex.

Phan Thi Tai Kiet's header off a Nguyen Hay Hien cross sealed the Vietnamese's third win in as many outings—good for the top spot in the so-called "Group of Death."

In the first game, Indonesia, donning an inspired performance from goalkeeper Jumaldin, refused to tattle in the face of Singapore's relentless attack in the final 10 minutes and hung on to a scoreless draw.

Capitalizing on a fagged-out Indonesian defensive line, the Singaporean frontlinded their rivals with a barrage of shots from the 60th minute until the final whistle only to see Jumaldin parry their every attempt to the delight of the lean crowd.

The weakened left the Singapore booters (0-1-1)—one of the favorites to contend with the Thailand—with only a point to show in two matches, dimming their chances of barging into the semifinals in Group B, while the Indonesians, who were held to a scoreless draw by Myanmar in their first outing, has two points (0-2-0).

Vietnam (2-0-0) for its part put away Myanmar 10-0 (1-0) as of press deadline.

"It's frustrating when you dominate the final 10 minutes of the match and you don't score," Singapore's Serbian coach Radojko Avramovic, whose team's first save was on the hands of the ex-ards of its last two matches, said.

Despite the draw that pushed them to sole third behind Malaysia and Laos (1-1-1) in Group B, Indonesian head coach Peter Withe said he was satisfied with his team's performance.

"I was very pleased with our game, but [might was a very crucial factor here," Withe added.

Up next for the Indonesians is Vietnam, whom they will play on Saturday in a match that could pretty much determine their chances of making it to the semifinals. *Cadaff Tapon, PIA Visayas Bureau*

HARRELL Benitez of the Philippines (center) is tie to beat Thailand's Sukanya Prangthorn and Wajee Kaeyamtoor to win ball during their women's football match last night. *AGNES DELA CRUZ*

Fil-Am swimmers to create big ripple

By Marc Anthony Reyes

LOS BAÑOS—THE FILIPINO-American swimmers have started to arrive for the 23rd Southeast Asian Games and they don't look like your old typical Asian Tigers who is seen "heavily training" in an unfinished pool here.

Swimming association president Mark Joseph said that the Fil-Am holder of the national records in the 1,500 meters freestyle, 200m freestyle and 400m individual medley events has slipped into the country quietly with her coach Jeff Ripple of Rollins Island three days ago.

This is the first SEAG for Torres, a veteran NCAA competitor from the Rollins School in Florida which is noted for its swimming firepower.

Olympian Jackie Pangilinan is an ex-senior last last night, while Jh Webb, SEAG champion Miguel Morabina and Miguel Molina are already in the country training at the Trace Aquatics Center where the swimming competitions will be held starting on Nov. 28.

The Philippines will also host an two more Fil-Am Mikhail Byers and Bobby Welsh and Olympian Timmy Cruz.

Water polo bets down Viets, brace for silver

JAMES TODAY | Team Aquatics Center
Oct. 6— Indonesia 6, Malaysia 5
Oct. 8 (a.m.)—Malaysia 8, Singapore 3
Oct. 8 (p.m.)—Philippines 9, Malaysia 5

By Marc Anthony Reyes

LOS BAÑOS—THE PHILIPPINES kept Vietnam at bay with a solid defensive effort unleashed a flurry of goals in the second half to prevail, 15-3, for its third victory in the 23rd Southeast Asian Games water polo competition last night at the Trace Aquatics Center.

The victory paved the way for a possible silver medal finish for the host country as defending champion Singapore handily defeated Thailand in the third game, 22-3, to practically seal the championship.

The Filipino mentors won against Malaysia's their last assignment on Monday to seal the silver medal, a finish the country last achieved in 1999 in Brunei and in 1981 in Singapore. The Philippines has never won this event so far.

Malaysia, the country's dome contender for silver, suffered a 4-6 upset to unrelish setback Indonesia in the first game. The Malaysians now hold a 2-2 record, while the Indonesians have a 1-3 record.

A win by Malaysia, though, would mean a heroic medal finish for the country's ranks the water sport on the other ruler.

The Philippine bites in gold medal chance after a heartbreaking 7-6 loss last Tuesday to Singapore, the region's water polo heavyweight.

However, a silver is enough to get the RP team to the Asian Games in Busan, South Korea next year.

Michael Jacobus, Shelwin delaDue, Roy Canete and Danny delaFuente took turns in clothing goals as the Philippines posted a 4-1 lead in the first quarter.

But it was the superb defense of Alex Orbe that turned the tide decisive for the Vietnamese, who went scoreless in the last two quarters for their second loss in four games.

Tough test awaits SEA Games golf field

By Macung R. Castillo

CANLUBANG, LAGUNA—MORE than the Thais, the Indons and the Malaysians, the Philippine golf squads teeing up in the 22nd Southeast Asian Games will have to contend with the tough The Country Club course.

The course, a favorite haunt of RP golfers, is a great test for the Dec. 1-9 competition with premium on length and precise tee shots.

The tough lanes have been grown to major championship length and the 7,135-yard course will be playing to a par of only 78 (from the normal 71) after the par-5 hole. 4 and 10 were shorted to par-4s for the tournament.

The Philippine Golf Association of the Philippines coaching staff experts the rough, untouched for three months now, to be at least three inches in height and taper thick when subdivide in the 3 with the coach's encouragement.

"I am also glad that aside on this rough practically guarantees bogey or worse," said vice-admiral Lamberto Fernandez, also the SGAF vice-pres. "That's why our coaching staff has concentrated their training for our players to hit it straight."

In a related development, Malaysia spread out to send a women's team, leaving only six teams in the divisions which will start play on Dec. 1.

Thailand is the defending champion in both divisions after Vietnam scrambled golf from the roster of events in 2003.

Jessie Paguntan spun a second straight individual title but the Philippines will try to improve on a bronze medal finish in team play in both divisions in Kuala Lumpur four years ago.

Three veterans of Kuala Lumpur and a newcomer in former Singapore amateur champion Jeff Ian Elbia.

Jay Bayron and Marvin Dumandan, who were with Paguntan in Kuala Lumpur, are also back in the men's team along with former Philippines amateur champion Michael Silva.

Jayvin Mario Apuan, Satya Tampinco and Prospero Bendaol make up the women's squad.

Thailand has been orphaned by two Chinese Pedestal, who turned pro more than a month ago, and is not as rock-solid unlike Malaysia, which will be hammered by Dinah Leadbeater protégé Ian Leong.

The men's fixtures is four-to-play, three-to-count while the top two of three scores in women's play count.

To the Woodshed

By Percy D. Dello

THE VOICE ON THE OTHER END of my cellphone was literally but harsh.

"Dy, pahindugan mo naman kami," Charito Soriano, who'll rather not then talk, was just too anxious to hear the news this time.

What about? I asked.

Pamor.

About the host, Charito says—the host being Philippine Olympic Committee honcho Jose "Peping" Cojuangco.

Ms. Soriano, media officer of 22nd Southeast Asian Games goes on trying to assure me everything going down next Peping and the boys had successfully been taken to the woodshed.

By the by, Jose—OMA herself to have their hunters tanned and attitude adjusted.

Charito was in fortunes or e-mail the message but never did—a situation that normally has me scrambling about left undone by a public relations people in a firefighting mode.

Anyway, our colleague Ricah Trinidad—who joined us at Wee Lee's Restaurant later in the day was happy to share the contents of the message.

Personally from a Malacañang source, the text said the President was livid, "gali na gali" during a meeting on the SEA Games—"sobrang galit" Cojuangco and other sports officials like subsidy children, for "not getting their acts together" and failing to show a good showing for the Games.

The text gave me to say that the finished book "hunting or not hunting" that the government provided for the Games are going down the drain, that the President who does not have a clue about sports organization can now "unbalasan," has many to blame for the day, rather than me.

COMMENTARY

"You have to be the boss," major damage has been done ("Hindi ang damage in-ang napuno: ...").

If the beaming from the President was indeed true, it probably dictated another Cojuangco used his power. A spanking this done to the trainers is hard to state strong threat.

Sometimes, playing hard for a much richer epic you on a wound gun of the game becomes improbable, like'd rather stand around than fly around. That's rather low is a half-hour-hour down a home ball.

Anyway, the 22nd SEA Games Annually opens on Sunday.

Strike up the band. Or use the Samoni drape.

The host of Peping Cojuangco's celebration or swallowing is almost here.

Sports Bites. For someone temporary lacking a laptop and hi-tech accoutrements, the Candon City Cyber Library has been tremendous. Situated in a regular library with books, the place is open because digital in 2002, with funding from Boston-bar Congressman Eric Singson. Now with more than 20 computers, the library offers students and other interested parties with unlimited access through the wonders of the worldwide web. HOT! xxx. Allen, the current city mayor never ever the cyber library is in shape.

RP eyes better finish in Para Games

By Cynthia D. Balana

DESPITE THE LACK OF RESOURCES AND LITtle assistance from the national government, the Philippines will be represented by 167 disabled athletes and officials in the 3rd Asian Para Games to be held in Manila from Dec. 14 to 21.

The announcement was jointly made by Bacolod Mayor and Local Organizing Committee Chairman Evelio Leonardia and Philippine Amateur Sports Games Organizing Committee Chairman during a press conference yesterday.

Dalisay said the GOMO was helping the disabled athletes because the disabled sector is one of the sectors being championed by the department.

The Asian Para Games is a biennial multi-sport event for disabled persons and aims to promote friendship and solidarity among them in the region.

The first Asian Para Games was held in Malaysia where the Philippines ranked only sixth in the overall medal tally standing. In the second para games held in Vietnam, the Philippines finished fifth.

Dalisay said the athletes were trained to improve their standing despite the lack of training venues which were being used by Philippine athletes participating in the SEA Games.

"Our athletes have been training on their own despite the scarce resources and help from the government. Still, I would like to congratulate them for this. I don't think any of the other countries have as they sacrifice will try their best," Dalisay said.

He said participating athletes included the paraos, those in wheelchairs, and those who are blind.

About 1,200 disabled delegates from member-countries are expected to announce their athletes participation in the games. Malaysia's athletes are also sports. The **main sports include** athletics, swimming, badminton, table tennis, wheelchair basketball, and goal ball while the demonstration sports include boccia, sailing, tenpin bowling and bowling. About 1,700 medals are at the stake.

Malaysia will be sending 164 disabled athletes, Thailand, 162; Myanmar, 161; Laos, 14; Brunei, 58; Timor Leste, 24; Singapore, 46; Cambodia, 13; and Vietnam, 98.

A PARTICIPANT in the coming 3rd Asian Para Games. *Jose Noah Cuaderno*

Fil-Am gymnast eyes 3 golds

By Dennis U. Erno
Sports Editor

THE FIRST THING YOU'LL SENSE from Fil-Am gymnast Mel Beatrice is the unwavering dedication to succeed.

Reminded of all the anxieties surrounding him, Beatrice brushed the matter on the stage aside upbeats yesterday at the Rizal Memorial Gymnasium Annex.

"I feel great and rested," said Beatrice, 22, when asked about his mental strength since for the Philippine team in the Southeast Asian Games.

Charlie Nelson, his longtime coach under UE, said Beatrice will be in top condition come the SEAG.

"He's peaking at the right time," said Nelson.

The son of Mel and Blogger Beatrice is then joined a huddle with national coach Santiago Ty Commissioner Raul Tuazon, Antonio Leal Al Ramirez, Ramon Suzara and Al Francis Narzas.

"We have a wonderful team. We help each other," said Beatrice. And Tuazon is the other spearhead of the national team.

The 5-foot-5 Pinatubo twice a gold medalist three years ago in the Germany SEAG.

The slim, Beatrice isn't just looking for a single gold. On top of the list, he is pushed to figure prominently in the vault and floor exercises.

"It's going to be a wonderful experience joining Edward (you guys," Beatrice said.

Beatrice, an academic All-American pitching star of University of Illinois Chicago, gained the admiration of a country hungry for a sporting hero when he didn't pull strings to make the national team for the 2005 SEAG.

Recently wrote he wanted to bring Nelson with him.

As a walk in, he was impressive during a workout with veteran teammates of the national team, earning the nod of Ty Thes Philippine Olympic Committee president John Barry supposed Beatrice's inclusion in the national gymnastics team which was missing however and could be even the objective of a no-gold production in the 1991 Kuala Lumpur SEAG.

A total of 24 golds are at stake in men's and women's gymnastics.

"We're looking at 4 to 5 golds," said Ty.

Choosing his words carefully, a former varsity and diver at Lincoln High, Beatrice said he isn't going to promise big things in the Games.

"I'll just work hard and have fun," Beatrice said.

Beatrice, who is one year away from finishing a computer engineering degree, again came to represent at an exposure for the gymnastics association.

Sportsman businessman Johnny Velez, owner of the world-wide Johnny Air Cargo and cracks of Fourtrax, from the hills for the gymnasts and his coach.

"Aside from his athletic prowess, Mel is also a very bright student. By also putting premium on his studies, Mel also sets an example among our athletes," Velez said.

Early this year Velez also helped the national team perform world-class gymnastics competitions in New York.

Beatrice says that this may be his final SEAG.

"After the Games, I'm going to take a lot of places and go back to the US to get my degree," Beatrice said.

As he pulled his way through the throes of the age old gym, Beatrice was quick to acknowledge admirers.

He perked in the nearby Rizal Memorial Coliseum, a basketball rich arena which is converted into a gymnastics hall by the competitions.

"I'll be like home," said Beatrice. Now, that's good news for the Philippines.

WITH Mel Pinatubo around, things are looking up for the country's gymnastics squad.

RP beach volley bets pumped up

By Christian Ian Tan
PDN Sports Bureau

MACALOD CITY—BORN AND RAISED IN California, Filipino-Americans Heidi Bueno and Chad Bowyer had long wanted to represent the country in international courts. They just couldn't find the opportunity in the past.

Now that they have the chance to do so in the 23rd Southeast Asian Games, they have set their sights on not only how but the Philippines' first gold medal in beach volleyball.

"I've been wanting to play for Philippines for the longest of times, but I just did not know how to do it," Bueno, who has been competing in the American Volleyball Professionals Tour, said after serving as the assistant here yesterday.

Bowyer and Bueno will feature Team B of the RP beach volleyball squads, respectively, together with other PE duos. Bowyer will be teamed up with Jessie Schuetzer, while Bueno will play with Dexter Bueno.

"I'm excited, but at the same time nervous because my parents and relatives in Manila are coming over to watch the games," the 5-foot-10 Bueno, who is ranked seventh in the AVP Tour, said.

Bowyer is coming in from Redondo Beach, while the 27-year-old Bueno grew up in Corpus City before she moved to Honolulu, Hawaii in 1996.

"It feels good to be here (Philippines) and I'm really looking forward to make the Filipino colors proud," said the 6-foot-1 Bowyer, who is on the country for the first time. "I hope to win the gold for the Philippines."

The Philippines last saw action in the 1997 SEA Games in Jakarta, Indonesia where it place 12th in basketball and women's play.

"I wish that I could represent Philippines every SEA Games and if possible, also in the Asian Games," he said.

HEART START FOR SEAG: Philips, the leader in defibrillator technology, is equipping the 23rd Southeast Asian Games with Philips Heartstart Defibrillators through the Philippine Center for Sports Medicine. The HeartStart units will be put at venues where there are high risks for sudden cardiac arrest. Butch Suntay (right), Philips Medical Systems general manager, turns over the HeartStart units to Dr. Mario Rivera of PCSM.

Mayors ask support for Filipino athletes

TWO METRO MANILA MAYORS URGED THE rest of publicking to sports and instead called on leaders to support the Filipino athletes' bid to the 23rd Southeast Asian Games.

San Juan Mayor Joseph Victor Ejercito and Malabon Bienvenido of Quezon City expressed the same sentiment when the men's track relay passed by their respective areas yesterday afternoon.

"Let's put sports ahead of politics," Ejercito told reporters upon the quadrille Team's arrival at the Tanghalang Nicanor Jr. San Juan City.

The San Juan gym will be hosting the fencing events of the biennial meet.

Bienvenido encouraged the entertainment to watch the events to be held at the Araneta Coliseum.

Wizards rally for win No. 5

[illegible]

ARWIND SANTOS KNOCKED IN crucial baskets in the final period to lead the Magnolia Hotshots past scrapping Toyota Otis, 73-64, and stretch their unbeaten PBL Honda Cup record to five games yesterday at the JCSGO Gymnasium/Cubao.

Santos registered with 14 points while fellow player Jason Misolas and Filipino Gelly Williams combined for 27 as Magnolia dealt the Knights a fourth loss in five games.

Earlier, Jay-R Reyes delivered another for Hotshot purchasers as Rain or Shine slipped past Welcoat Coolers, 74-73, in overtime.

Reyes shot free of his 17 points in convincing and had 11 rebounds.

Rain or Shine joined Kwantong Ginebra and Manila's to ascend spot at 3-2 while Harbour Centre absorbed its third straight loss for a 2-3 card.

"Reyes is improving a lot so chosen as our point man guards and I just hope he can continue playing that way," said coach Caloy Garcia of his 6-foot-7 center, who passed 26 points, 10 rebounds and six blocks in his last game.

Jojo Tanghay drilled in a game-high 19 for the Blaze Runners, who overhauled a 12-point deficit in regulation.

The Wizards, who trailed most of the game, owned the most-revered points to extend their lead to 63-53 from 57-53.

The Blaze Pioneers banded on Tanghay and Eugene Tan's buckets finish baskets to erased the lead, 73-70, after Joseph Bacto angled put the Permanente ahead, 69-70.

Jasmine M. Payo

The scores:

Free Game

RAIN OR SHINE 19—Tanghay 19, Reyes 17, Caleb 8, Rabanes 6, Ilisastri, Sena 3, Sta.A.Ortiguero 0, Aquino 0, Tagaro 0, Agabao 0.

HARBOUR CENTRE 73—Pan 18, Lanete 11, Arana 8, Sapinoso 6, Sta. Pety 7, Bacto, Ramirez 6, Mendoza 2, Sta. Pety 7, Bacto 6

INQUIRER

OPINION

Chicken's back

THE MOST MYSTERIOUS—AND MOST WANTED—of President Macapagal-Arroyo's chickens is back. Virgilio Garcillano is home to roost. It seems, though, that this particular chicken's coop is located firmly within the President's camp. Not that we have heard from this fox because the style of Alejandro Roces' famous story) peculiar chicken. The country has not (so far, anyway) heard from Garcillano directly, but only through first, his wife, and most recently, Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago (let Marie-Rep. Prospero Pichay, Bedroom say that Garcillano wants to clear his name.

EDITORIAL

Only now? Why not back then? And, most importantly, if better late than never, then in what way? Now that the administration has closed off all legal avenues, how will Garcillano vindicate himself? Through a press conference? That could turn out to be another production number like the one in which two CDs were brandished by Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye, setting off the President's woes. Indeed, of what probative, or even corroborative, value would a press conference have? None. Particularly if it turns out to be a tightly controlled one.

Most probably, Garcillano will have to end up being questioned in Congress—in all likelihood by the House of Representatives and not by the Senate. This is where the fate of this peculiar chicken becomes intimately tied again to that of the President. For by stepping forward to flout the possibility of taking custody of the former election commissioner, Pichay is clearly showing whose political neural Garcillano remains. It is not for nothing that Pichay is the President's speaker-in-waiting.

We cannot help but wonder about the timing of it all, of course. If there is something revolting about Garcillano coming back home to roost at the onset of the Christmas season, it's also a politically convenient time for the government. Rides in the lowest priority of most people this time of year. People's minds are focused on friends and family. Congress itself will not be in the mood to hear to anything for very long, and will gladly make short shrift of any investigation that may threaten or begin. Add to this the long-delayed, but now virtually finished, replacement of pro-impeachment Speaker Arroyo-ite chairmen with more pliable colleagues, and the stage has been set for the cocktail picnic, the boring recess, the chow food.

The calculations of the palace apparently go this way: The controversy won't go away, and it's premature until the new leadership of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines begins to assert itself, things could go badly for the President. Better to go for "closure," and have Garcillano read from a prepared script, which happens to also implicate members of the opposition (the statement that he is prepared to name a "persistent" caller other than the President is widely understood to mean a leading opposition candidate). Whether Garcillano does a good job or not for his handlers can be offset by the lack of public interest in politics during the holiday season.

Still, even if we assume such a cunning plan is in the offing, this doesn't mean that it will succeed. Malacañang's peculiar chicken has too much explaining to do. His disappearance serves as a reminder of a phrase that Ms Arroyo's defenders in the Senate love. During the debates on the impeachment complaint, they kept saying, "The law may be harsh, but it is the law." And indeed, the law can often be harsh, as shown by one of its precepts.

The law presumes all students have been told, assumes that flight is a sign of guilt. It is not the same as an admission of guilt, nor does it necessarily prove guilt. But it indicates, and strongly suggests, guilt. In the wake of a controversy that not only subjected his reputation to the gravest challenge, Garcillano fled. His flight must have been aided and abetted by many. And who were they? At whose expense? And was it under duress? But that is assuming we accept the widely understood sequence of events, which may not even end up being Garcillano's lies.

We are hearing too many administration politicians wondering out loud if he actually left the country. Which means that when the time comes for him to give his account of events, the tale may be too tall compared to what the public already knows. No one should put it past the administration to try to sell an unbelievable story either to the public or to its supporters in Congress.

Why was construction of 2 footbridges stopped?

THE 10-CHAINED EX-CONGRESSMAN (Ex-Assemblyman Ernesto Dy) from the Quezon Memorial Circle in Fairview is the most accident-prone area in Metro Manila, according to official statistics released last week. The reason is this Quezon-Commonwealth intersection, which, as it is now, all 12 lanes broken they go to either an elevated or underpass. Because this is a wide avenue, motorists drive fast, not expecting pedestrians to cross it. Motorists are also not very patient lately or with long traffic lights. That is a dangerous mix for disaster. No wonder many accidents happen here.

Pedestrians literally risk their lives when they cross the street. The Metro Manila Development Authority has begun to remedy the situation by constructing footbridges that for such a long street, the footbridges are far apart. So pedestrians, not wanting to walk the distance to the nearest footbridge, take the risk and dash across. Most of the time they make it, but sometimes they don't. And bones and flesh are no match to speeding steel.

The MMDA again tried to remedy the situation by erecting pink fences on the street islands so pedestrians cannot cross the street at ground level. It has done this on Quezon Avenue, which is a continuation of Commonwealth after the Quezon Circle. But the fences are incomplete and have gaps, and so pedestrians dash through these gaps to cross Quezon Avenue, which is thirteen or seven-no Commonwealth—even if there is a footbridge just several feet away. Or despite warning signs that one can do by crossing the street. In some cases, footrails and fancy pedestrians risk their lives rather than take the few steps up the footbridge to safety cross the street.

Because of the fences, motorists speeding on Quezon Avenue don't expect pedestrians to dash across even more than motorists on Commonwealth. So when a pedestrian does dash across, they can't step on time and MMDA accident statistics pedestrians have to dash.

But fences are supposed to this challenge?

Well, yes, but there are other ways to avoid the clear prejudice implicit in the now many homelessness, which were triggered by homicidal disasters caused by the number of drivers and nurses. There are also many unfinished projects by engineering "Third World" stages but are being "pushed on" by the loan consortia' driving clients for national predicaments. The changing demographics of Europe and America should warn us that they will be receiving more and more Filipinos to fill jobs for which there are not enough retirees and willing locals.

Are barriers

For every family—a scholar

THE SITUATION IS LIKE "THE CHANGE OF THE Light Brigade." "Your left, your right, behind you, volunteers come — no rain, no flight, valour begin!"

The only hope for this hapless country seems to be education. But despite education department officials and teachers who do their best, education has fallen to ruin: huge classes, no classrooms, no materials, and no salaries. Supposedly, poorly trained teachers are no teachers, public budget or no budget, textbook guidelines or guidelines disappearing in the dustpans. "Politicians and bureaucrats have already destroyed basic education," They say. "Just wait for the long-term consequences."

And now "the US wants our teachers" and "Estonia offers us our textbooks." No escape desperation by borrowing grants, trusts or not, the subject is timeless.

Education is not for luxurious, — closer to the only way out. Thankfully, there is fervour in education in the private sector. But so still retain the literature because a struggles in a society one of mismanaged attention by government, it is better to commit the effort would positively thrive

Press must be free

RE: THE UNDERGRAD INCIDENT

Students of the University of the Philippines College of Mass Communication (UP CMC) feel the statement that President Macapagal-Arroyo made last May 10 before the Federation of Free Workers of the Philippines (FFW) in Baguio City shocking, to spread by the media, she said how the media must cast aside their "bad boy" image by focusing on what the public wants—economy. According to her, "the economy is the only issue we have today amid those issues who never to public attention."

The President should be reminded that the mass media are not just harbingers of good or bad news. They report events based on the value-added elements of news. On the other hand, the gatekeepers of information decide what should be printed, aired or uploaded not only on the basis of what the public wants, but also on what the public needs. The media serve as watchdogs of the government and are therefore duty-bound to expose all important issues, regardless of how the concerned government institutions and officials see print fit.

President Arroyo should know how media organizations function. Being servants of the workings of the press is a crucial step to knowing the role of an independent news media in national development.

There are journalists who have lived up to the highest standards of professions, and some of them sacrificed enough as for instance, let the silenced and even murdered. Instead of using unproved, absurd media's alleged lack of credibility, the President should focus on bringing the perpetrators of violence against media practitioners to justice.

If the President wants to help boost media, she should address the "undermined issues of justice for slain journalists. Names have been mentioned for the 73 murders of journalists that have occurred since 1986.

While it is important that the President try to keep the media down to earth, it should also be aware of what they should report, not to interfere upon the administration to ensure that journalists can work in an atmosphere where they can properly exercise their profession without being harassed or threatened with violence.

—RICHMOND S. THOMSON
JOSE LEVI JUSTO BERBERS,
College of Mass Communication,
University of the Philippines,
Diliman, Quezon City

Vandals should be dealt with properly

AN INFORMED HOPE TO BE

Many Filipinos of complex problem and other issues of vandalism should be spearheaded immediately by the Manny Mendoza Development Authority to start by the Southeast Asian Games this November.

Local government officials, non-government organizations and other concerned citizens should lend a helping hand in cleaning and beautifying our streets and start with a zero-tolerance to every act of vandalism.

It is vandalism of vandals destroying walls belonging to the government or a private entity should be considered misdeeds, and culprits should be put behind bars to work for at least 6 hours or two.

Vandalism, after all, has no place in a society where the rule of law is strictly enforced.

—PETRONILO CRUZ JR.,
UST Taft St., Makati City

LETTERS

In bad taste

I AM REFERRING THIS LETTER TO SET the record straight in connection with the negative publicity that received the musical performance of Aerosmith Hit '70, dubbed "Our Wings of Song, One Big Flight," in the Manila Times last Nov. 19. It is apparent that a group named people are blaming the members of the class for ostensibly allowing the police (under government) to [illegible] into a political polemic against President Macapagal-Arroyo.

As a member of the class which has adopted President Gloria as one of its own, I wish to make this apology—on behalf of the Eagle Hill '05 Batch—for—to those who bought tickets to the concert, the audience, to the Ateneo de Manila University and to Fr. Joaquin Bernas who, along with dozens of others, walked out when Sen. Gregory Ong's wife waved reading his father's "heroism did not wash out to [illegible] and civil" speech.

The truth of the matter is that the great majority of the Aerosmith members [illegible] have had the concert would be a creative form a propaganda platform to malign the current administration. Except for three or four people, the great majority of the students, including the 30 performers, were caught flat-footed by the reading of Ong's speech, which certainly was one of those in an extreme minority to [illegible] to express their sentiments.

As will be only understandable if the members of Ateneo High School's Class of '05 were equally affected by the public for the misbehavior of half-wits. We ask for their understanding and forgiveness.

—RICHMOND LACSON,
Ateneo High School '05, Makati City

Enough is enough?

Voices on INQ7.net

WRITER PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO—condemned hard or not, she's the best for the country. She cannot run the country with a beginner economics, personally no to any penny-wise and pound-foolish [illegible] Even if Mr. Aquino wants, or is a chance as a friend, she still is the best to run the country smoothly with confidence and create more jobs. She knows more in the best ever in Philippine history. We Filipinos may be wise or follow—that is the habits of Filipinos around the world. Stop [illegible] making never-ending [illegible] and listening to rumors.

I will join in her problems and pitch in overall for the sake of the country for the economic turmoil you, where they are now and compare them to where the Philippines is—still behind and going further backwards because of some narrow-minded or paid people who can see no benefit businesses and the government. This will backfire. They are running their mouth and the government's mouth like advice is not from a government, for a word and it will really support you. No government in the world will do anything for its people.—Albert E. Sanvil-Makati, Philippines of Bahrain (via e-mail)

If more than 80 percent of Filipinos could only have the opportunity to see these news items, the people of Americans on your pages would surely take [illegible] views of angry opinions calling for the President to resign from where she illegally is now and be gone forever.

Some history proved that the economic ideology failed in countries where a coup ensued. It would surely fail in the Philippines because many of its followers are more likely to be as corrupt as the leaders of the former communist regimes set to provide to assist Filipino politicians.

I never believed that communism would solve the world's problems, much less the Philippines', but there were well-meaning socialist thinkers around from which I would like to see in something to my fellow countrymen all over the world.

Overseas and local Filipino workers are the backbone of our nation. Based on reliable estimates, there are about 8 million Filipino workers abroad. Counting what each has their close relatives [illegible] who depend on him/her for their well-being, and who do not have to depend on the promises of politicians as for a better life, we can help make a better nation or boost the share of entrepreneurial and productive enterprises.

We could be of use to explore with it only we could assist the the salvation of our own and be better more of our people.—Antonio Mayuga, Bonn, Germany (via e-mail)

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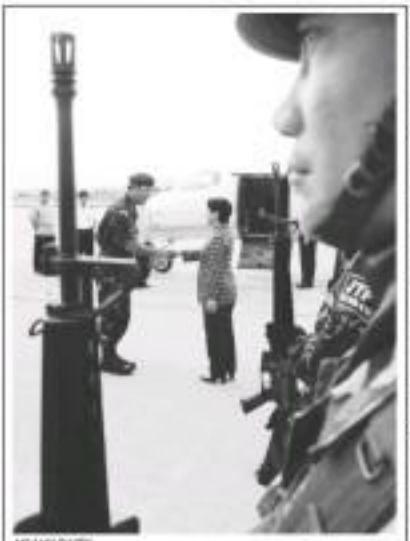
Across the NATION

MILF to propose vote on Moro state



HEAVY DUTY
A soldier stands in attention as President Macapagal-Arroyo arrives at the New Capitol Site Grounds in Barangay Kinuman in Buluan (Kadayo) Nov. 22 to inspect government projects there.

COTABATO CITY—THE MORO ISLAMIC LIBERATION Front (MILF) said it would propose the holding of a plebiscite with the aim of creating "a separate homeland (for Moros) in Mindanao."

Eid Kabalu, MILF spokesperson, said the proposal, which would be resumed through the RGLF peace panel, could be finalized as early as next year after the rebel group has finished a series of consultations with the Moro people and formal communities.

One of the issues being asked in the consultations is autonomy dominate, one of the two remaining issues confronting government and MILF negotiators.

The government and the MILF have been negotiating to resolve the decades-old Moro rebellion, which already claimed hundreds of thousands of lives since it first broke out in the 1960s.

Jun Montemil, head of the MILF peace panel secretariat, said the MILF already met tribal leaders from Bukidnon, Cotabato in Sultan Kudarat, Davao provinces, and the Zamboanga Peninsula.

The result of the consultations would be presented when the peace negotiations resume.

"Legally and historically, this (issue) is the homeland of the Moro people," Kabalu said when asked why the MILF is willing to a separate state.

However, he said the MILF is also willing to compromise on its demand for a separate republic for Moros if Mindanao.

More and indigenous peoples account for less than half of the population in Mindanao.

"We recognize that we are only minority. Our proposal for a separate homeland will only be confined to areas where Moros are majority," Kabalu said.

He said when the peace talks are remobilized, areas with large Moro populations would also be asked if they are in favor of the agreement or not.

As efforts to strike a peace agreement continue, military planes continued to attack suspected lairs of Moro gunmen fighting the government in Talitay, Datu in two more soldiers died since hostilities resumed on Tuesday.

At Brig. Gen. Alexander Aby, commander of the Task Force Comet, was speaking before a large crowd in Isla during the exhibition of the "Week of Peace," batch equivalent medal for Israel. **Jeoffrey Maitem, Inf/ Generalsoul Aida Alpeda, PDF/M Bureau**

25 journalists attend safety seminar in Davao

DAVAO CITY—At least 25 journalists from all over the country attended the two-day workshop on Safety Training for Journalists here, which ended Tuesday.

The training, which was held at the Philippine war identified as the most dangerous place for journalists next to Iraq, was conducted by the Belgium-based International News Safety Institute (INSI) and the Committee to Center for Journalists and Investigative (CCIJ).

During the training, journalists—mostly from Mindanao—were taught to evaluate risks by becoming aware of the threat to their safety and to identify potential risks during coverage in hostile environment such as wars, natural calamities and other dangerous events.

The safety training module given to the journalists also included dealing with demonstrations during coverage who were into a hostile crowd against reporters.

The participants were also taught techniques of responding to a situation when a colleague becomes a victim of violence like being shot or in the course of war coverage.

Rodilee Allen, who had six years of military experience with the British Special Air Service (SAS), stressed the importance of communication, especially if journalists work as a team.

She said it would help journalists if they talk about their coverage because this would help prepare them for possible risks. **Grace Alfonsio, PDI Mindanao Bureau**

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ROUNDUP

Marijuana leads to arrests

CAMP SINAMAR, Benguet—Police arrested three teenagers, aged 15 to 19, for transporting more than P170,000 worth of marijuana bricks along the Halsema highway on Nov. 21. Reports from the Cordillera police office here said the three suspects, all natives of Bayaoyan town, were arrested in a checkpoint set up by the police at the intersection of the Asiatica highway and the Kayapan-Cabiao Road. Police said the 22 bricks of dried marijuana leaves seized from the suspects weighed 21 kilograms and were estimated to ten cartons boxes.
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Swiss plays with gun, dies

CALAMBA CITY—A young Swiss died after the gun he was playing with accidentally went off while he was with his Filipino friends at a public market in Los Baños, Laguna on Wednesday night. Chief Insp. Marvin Sore, Los Baños police chief, identified the victim as Jakubis Roedi, 23, who reached an emergency at a local bar in the town. She said a few minutes before the accident happened at around 7:30 p.m., the victim, together with his friends Rommel Palma and Marvin Segovia, went to the public market in Purok 6 Batong to buy drinks. While the three were waiting, Roedi allegedly pulled out his underwear .38 cal. revolver and pointed the gun at his temple. "The victim then told his friends that he is motivating from (which) because of his girlfriend. So he said Palma and Segovia warned the victim not to play with the gun as it might scare the people at the market. "But as the two were moving away, the gun accidentally went off," Sore said.
Marlon Ramos, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Millionaire killed

CEBU CITY—A millionaire was killed by a still unidentified gunman in Carmen, North Cotabato on Tuesday. Police reported on Thursday that the victim, Teddy Benito, was on his way home around 9 p.m. when gunned down along the national highway in Poblacion, Carmen. They said the victim died of a bullet wound in the head.
Jeoffrey Maitem, PDI/Mindanao Bureau

Rangers Club anniversary

TAL RANGERS Club of Taal, Batangas will hold its 68th anniversary ball on Nov. 29 at the Town Plaza of Taal. Rep. Francis Escudero was invited as guest speaker while the other guests are MMDA chair Bayani Fernando and former Gov. Leviste Laguardia. Awards will be given to five people who have their roots in Taal—Milagros Aldana, Fr. Victor Badillo, Ambassador Raul Goco, Rep. Paolo Dolor and Dr. Domingo Landicho.

Congressman rides on 'Arroyo' controversy

BACOLOD CITY—MISSING OCCIDENTAL Rep. Jose Carlos Lacson of the third district has sought an investigation of the misspelling of the surname of President Macapagal-Arroyo on recently released P1,000 bills.

Lacson filed House Resolution 1320 on Monday, asking the House committee of the House Committee on Banks and Financial Intermediaries, of which he is vice chair, to look into the misspelling of the President's name as "Arroyo."

"There is an urgent need to inquire about the events leading to the misspelling in order to avoid a repetition ... and have appropriately to determine whether there is a deficiency or defect either in the law or in its implementation," he said.

He said the printing of Philippine currency is not just like the printing of any other official documents but "virtually a sovereign act" of the country as payment for the foreign borrowing Filipinas (BSP) is guaranteed by the government.

Lacson said the Philippines earlier depended on foreign currency printers and printers for its supply of hard notes and source. Carla Gomez, **PDI Visayas Bureau**

Grand Cebu opening set

CEBU CITY—DOOMSDAY, IT ISN'T going to get any bigger than this.

The Cebu Doubleheart Attila Games Organizing Committee (Cebudoc) is counting on grand opening ceremony Sunday with a huge weekend meant to gather in the Cebu City Sports Center for festivities that will be ushered with Southern flavor.

"It will be the mother of all opening ceremonies, at least in the Southern part of the country," said Cebudoc chair Jonathan Gaisele. "Everything has been set for Cebu's hosting of the Games, beginning with colorful festivities welcoming the delegates."

Taken taken about prior to a month opening ceremony. To date, more than 20,000 tickets have been sold for the Games four festivities that will be highlighted by dancing performances and other traditional dances from top Visayan cultures.

And the highlight of the evening—a Pyrotillion fireworks show.

The opening starts at 6 p.m. with the traditional parade of nations, where various school dance troupes will accompany the delegates wearing their respective national costumes.

A pair of Filipino athletes from the six country to be held in Cebu—Iaisel, Davaoeno, expat lutsar, pursuit rider and mountainbiker—take the oath for the torch run leading to the lighting of the flames' are by Jennifer Bolisa, a paralympic athlete who won the event gold in the Dirt Arena Paralympics in Malaysia.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is expected to declare the Games open while hosting 1000 Mayor Duterte has been invited to give a welcome message.

Other guests are Cebu Boo Green Gaisele said the heads of the three host cities—Cebu City, Mayor Tommy Osmeña, Mandaue City Mayor Teddy Oseno and Lapu-Lapu City Mayor Novencio Bonoan.

TORCH REACHES TAGUIG

The 23rd Southeast Asian Games have hit Taguig City with the arrival of the torch relay there. Taguig City Mayor Freddie Tinga (left) receives the sparkle flame of the Games from Sen. Juan Ponce Mayor Boy Cabo. The torch has been relayed to 13 islands around the country. The biennial meet opens formally Sunday at the Quirino Grandstand.

RECORD

Woods claims 6th 'slam' title

PUBU BEACH, HAWAII—TIGER WOODS, who battled a stomach virus in the opening round, won the exclusive 30-hole PGA Grand Slam of Golf for the record sixth time Wednesday, closing with an 8-under 64 for a 7-stroke victory over Phil Mickelson.

Woods collected $800,000 and finished with a 13-under 131 total.

Mickelson, the PGA champion, shot a 68 to earn $250,000. US Open champion Michael Campbell shot 1970 to finish 22 strokes back, collecting $200,000. Vijay Singh was another stroke behind after a 69. He took home $150,000.

Woods was never seriously threatened. He opened with a 67 to a 3-stroke lead over Mickelson, and quickly widened the gap to five with birdies on four 3-and-3.

He finished with two eagles, five birdies and a bogey on the difficult Cabo del Sol course, which rolls 7,120 yards from Bay Golf Course. He won largely from on the first leader for the second day.

He hit 373-yard tee shot, Woods split the fairway with a 344-yard drive and hit a 6-iron to set up a 15-foot eagle putt that curled to the left and dropped into the cup. The gallery roared as Woods theoretically pumped.

On the par-5 14th, Woods drove 289 yards over the water and blasted a 5-wood from 266 yards over the green.

WOODS. Moves forward

Woods saved the par with a chip to 3 feet.

"Oh baby, how about this shot I just hit," he said, watching the towering shot. "That was pretty cool."

He then birdied a 12-foot eagle putt.

Woods also barely missed rising eagle putt on the final hole. AP

Empire King faces tougher test

SIXER EMPIRE KING SETS OUT TO defend his Presidential Gold Cup title next month, he may find the going a lot tougher than last year.

The 2004 Horse of the Year is coming into the country's most prestigious racing event still nursing a loss in the Manila Classic. Adding to his woes is the fact that he will be handicapped by the top weight of 58 kilos as he aims to score a record fourth win.

Furthermore, the son of Better Ride a clashing head-on with the finest bottle-bred champion around for an encounter he could not escape.

Also joining the hunt for the P15-million stakes's prize is the 2,000-meter battle are Gold Stonehigh, Cat's Gold and Lord Shiro.

Empire King labored to rule last year's PGC staging. Under Jeffrey Leddy, he clocked 2:00.5 to record a time in one of the most thrilling finishes recorded in the race that houses the country's chief executives.

On Dec. 11 at the San Lazaro Leisure Park, Jeffrey Guadaza will be aboard Empire King, who could only land third place in the Philippine Classic last Sunday after looking turnable following his 4½-length Classic triumph.

In a coupled list, Normie Esguerra's Bad Spirit (Real Quiet-Spirit Tale) and stallion Alby Boco's Sweet (Arrowtown-Grace Lewis) could be the biggest stumbling blocks for Empire King. Both Spirit is shooting for the biggest win of his racing career, while Time Blade hopes to water his eighth consecutive victory during the 32nd running of the Lovely-crowned spectacle.

Cover Girl (Rodrigo-Gallant Native) is bouncing-ready confidence after bouncing back to victory in the Philippine Derby. Pilotto Boards decided over Zion Prince, Cover Girl landed ninth in last year's PGC.

As for Red Sun Rising (Khazaam-Jeri Chance), this year's edition could be his final wish for glory. He aimed for a repeat in 2004 but finished fifth third.

Sources said the Tellana Stable here is bound for retirement after the 2005 racing season. For topping the 2003 Gold Cup, Red Sun Rising will take care a bit late impost weight.

Dan Delos Santos (3rd in the Metro Classic here dangerous he is when allowed to dictate the pace. He will can their same style again in his bid to erase the stigma of his 20th place finish when he joins Dad last year's hostilities.

Is RP ready for 23rd SEA Games?

FINALLY THE FOCUS SHIFTS FROM THE strife-torn nation to the athletes of Southeast Asia, who are here to compete in the 23rd SEA Games set from Dec. 27 to Dec. 5.

On Sunday afternoon, the symbolic SEAG Torch will be ignited at the Luneta grandstand before some 40,000 athletes fans. 11 countries who will launch their quest for the 459 gold medals up for grabs in 40 sports.

Recent Asian Games superstar (no champion and 2002 FIFA athlete of the Year Ililiane Camargo—forwards will carry the Philippine flag aboard on an 899-member RP delegation. Rolling to be host head long opening ceremonies starting at 5:30 p.m.

A record crowd of 800,000 people, led by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, is expected to attend the inaugural rites.

The National Capital Regional Police Office will be on full alert as part of its efforts to ensure the safeness and security of visitors. Director Vidal Querol, NCRPO chief, said a total of 15,000 policemen, firefighters, doctors and volunteers will secure the streets in Metro Manila and other key areas in Luzon and the Visayas.

"We are not taking any chances," said Querol.

Actually, the 23rd edition of the games has started with the football and water polo events. But this year's biennial meet, there are eight venues spread across the country—Cebu, Bacolod, Subic, Tagaytay, Angeles City, Los Baños, Davao and of course Manila, where a replica of the Australia torch will also be lit at the historic Rizal Memorial Track-Football Stadium, site of the athletics competitions. The main event is our sporting show.

Are we ready for the 23rd SEA Games?

"We are ready," said Philippine Southeast Asian Games Organizing Committee (Phil-Seac) chair Jose "Peping" Cojuangco.

"Our progress has been better than expected," added Cojuangco, who is also the president of the Philippine Olympic Committee. "Everything is falling into place despite the delays, including the lack of funding." And, even without basketball in the SEAG calendar, we are confident the country would be able to host a successful event.

"Sports can bring us together during our troubled times," Cojuangco said, referring to the recent bitter Misery Peninsula

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

He said Pacquiao's achievements in the world boxing arena have made millions of Filipinos truly proud. "There is now a Manny Pacquiao country."

A BIT OF FISA HISTORY. The FIVB International Basketball Federation (FIBA) was the brainchild of the present-day Fiba, which was organized in June 1932. Its first president was Louis Daniel, of Switzerland. The body which is half-a-dozen jurisdiction over basketball was the International Amateur Athletics Federation (IAAF) which later gave that mandate to the International Amateur Handball Federation.

In 1934, the Fiba (through the joint efforts of Dr. William Jones) representatives from Swiss Basketball League and Grand Duchy of San Sharoom of Italy) was able to convince the handball federation to concentrate to mandate on basketball and recognize Fiba as the only ruling body for basketball.

The negotiations for officially sold by Jones and Dr. Ian Thomson when they lobbied for basketball "independence" during the handball federation congress in August 1934 in Amsterdam, but the two cups of Bolsta were still given the opportunity to show their case "in a true spirit of sportsmanship and fair play."

Basketball became an Olympic event in the 1936 Berlin Games where the Philippines, making her debut in the dash-and-dribble sport, finished fifth, the country's best finish in the Olympics. Those who carried the RP colors were Ambrosio Padilla, Charles Daruk, Primitivo Martinez, Jacinto Cruz Cruz, Silverio Ocsan, Sotero Ventura, Amador Oliveros, John Morrell and Fermin Wenceslao. As expected, top favorite United States won the gold medal.

New carols emerge from Pampanga competition

ANGELES CITY—PAMPANGA PRIDE celebrates a true Kapampangan Christmas with new carols and tunes.

Pampanga-based composers have submitted 20 original Kapampangan carols to the first Christmas songwriting competition dubbed "Lights, Camera, Pasko" at the Holy Angel University here on Dec. 16.

"The number of entries is totally unexpected. We are also delighted with the quality of the entries and variety of genres," said Bobby Tarcelajo, director of the university's Center for Kapampangan Studies.

Tarcelajo said the entries include love songs, polka, gospel and traditional "kundiman."

He said those who submitted their original compositions include professional musicians, priests, priests, students and teachers.

Some of the entries come from Kapampangans living in Metro Manila and in the United States.

"The reason we created this was to ask a composition choral among Kapampangan composers. All of a sudden, we will be treated to a Christmas songs and they are all in Kapampangan. From now on, our Christmas will be different. Kapampangans will truly have a Kapampangan Christmas," he said.

Tarcelajo said the entries would be performed and judged at the Center for Kapampangan Studies quadrangle on Dec. 16. The show is open to the public.

—Ace Mislig, PIA Central Luzon Desk

BABY SITTER

Gigantic wooden sculptures in Bigan are companions of children in the province. This one in Barangay Guerrero supposed to keep watch over this child, who takes his snacks beside the sculpture, with which children are supposed to have more fun than watching TV.

Help pours in for villagers who fled war

LUCENA CITY— FOOD, MEDICINES and projects continue to pour for the more than 5,000 evacuees from intense military operations against communist gunmen and who are now housed in various evacuation centers in Candelaria, Tayabas and Unisan towns.

Officials of Bagged Kalibasan Obstacles of Mankind, a public-interest environmental legal defense center, who earned their local office here into a relief operations center, said they have been continuously receiving donations of assorted relief goods, mostly foodstuff for the evacuees.

"Some of the donors said they also offered prayers and lighted candles for peace to return to the affected villages. They are currently hoping for the fighting to stop," Jay Lita, a TE community organizer, told the locators.

He said the group has already brought the first batch of relief goods to Dolores town on Wednesday.

Lim also disclosed that Quezon activist priest, Fr. Raul Enriquez, would also celebrate "Mass for Peace" in Dolores town and other war-torn villages.

Fr. Raul has expressed serious concern for the refugees, especially for the children and the elderly," Lim said.

Dolores Mayor Rolando San Juan said the Regional Disaster Coordinating Council and the Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office have already delivered relief goods and medicines for the evacuees in his town.

"So far, we have sufficient stock of relief goods. We're hoping for the return of peace in our town as soon as possible," he said.

Quezon Rep. Proceso Alcala, who said he has been spending his own money for the relief goods that he's distributing in different evacuation centers, said he would augment for more relief goods from Manila government offices.

"I want to appeal to both government and the armed conflict that if they could not stop their fighting, they should spare the civilians from any harm," the congressman said.

Maj. Jose Irinco, spokesperson of the military's Southern Luzon Command based in Camp Vicente Lim, said the military has been continuously conducting relief operations in the affected villages.

"While our men have been simultaneously waging clearing operations to flush out the rebels, our guerrilla action teams composed of medical workers and social welfare officers provide moral and physical comfort to the evacuees," Irinco said.

Residents from different villages in Dolores, Candelaria and Tayabas towns have fled their homes since Monday for fear of being caught in the crossfire between communist gunmen and government soldiers.

—Belle Mollet Jr., PIA Southern Luzon Bureau

Transparency in mining industry urged

BAGUIO CITY—THE MINING INDUSTRY in the country can only be transparent to the public because foreign investors are all uncomfortable about local opposition to large-scale mining operations, foreign and local experts said here.

In a speech during the 32nd Mine Safety and Environment Conference last week, Cayetano Paredes, an Australian expert in mining community relations who is often tapped for government and industry consultancy, said "mining will have a negative impact on the environment and on [human] life."

But by observing a full accounting of the "ills" of the industry, experts like Bergen and geologist Rody Dizal believe that host communities will have all the power of information necessary to say yes or no to the construction of a locality mining town.

The "ills" refer to cases of old mines abandoned by defunct mining firms, and mining accidents such as those in Mt. Diwalwal and Itogon.

Indigenous communities in Benguet, where the country's oldest mines were born and later abandoned, have already taken steps at correcting some of these bad practices.

Community work

If only to bring back the things to the way they were, Benguet farmers offered to restore or rehabilitate mining areas abandoned in Benguet town.

Still, these mining companies can only succeed extraction and profit. This indigenous peoples are willing to rehabilitate these abandoned mines if the government will give them control of these resources," Fernando Mangili, secretary general of the farmers' group Agri Tabu, said in a press conference at the Conditions Peoples Alliance office here also last week.

The people biggest complaint is that mining firms have also abandoned the task of restoring mined out areas to the government.

Assistant Secretary Jeremias Delos, of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, said the government has scheduled the restoration of some abandoned mines in the country.

"The reason why the government is shouldering all the expenses for rehabilitation is because these mining companies have no budget at all," Delos said.

But he said the government could only restore 750 million in rehabilitation funds for Benguet Mines in Western Samar alone.

Poor companies

Most of the conference papers were centered on the regional mine monitoring campaigns, which claimed the industry despite progress made by the validation of the 1995 Philippine Mining Act by the Supreme Court in December last year.

Rolando Ibalino, former Mines and Geosciences Bureau director, presented the latest Fraser survey of mining companies across Asia-Pacific countries.

The survey results revealed the disconfor that foreign mine investors have in Philippine politics and the government's commitment to protect the mining industry.

But insights from the Fraser survey, which has been dominating the perspectives of 204 mine firms in 64 countries including the Philippines, still concentrated on the country's political uncertainties and investor anxiety in the government's ability to enforce its rules.

—Vincent Cabreza and Beatrice Cabreza, PIA Northern Luzon Bureau

Bid to bring Mindanao peace reaches soccer field in Davao

DAVAO CITY—Soccer will be rolling each other in more earnest next year in Mindanao, the hot zone children from Christian, Muslim and lumad communities, their barangays and to a easier field of fun where the ultimate dream is a kind of peace.

The Davao Football Association (DFA), in cooperation with the city government of Davao through the office of Councilor Mabel Bango-Acosta and the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), will hold the Arena Cup Ladies Football Festival and the Mindanao Week of Peace Football Festival on Nov. 26 at the Tondo Football Grounds in Agdo, Quimpo Blvd., Davao City.

Together with reinvented back to back national champions, the female football players of Davao, the soccer bonanza will involve youth players in Davao aged 8-12 years old with categories for boys and girls.

In a press statement, organizers said participants will come from Christian, Muslim and lumad who will represent their respective communities coming from the various sectors, districts, schools and non-government organizations involved in programs for the peace, youth and women.

Aside from the games, there will be activities, musical performances and video film showing related to the Mindanao Week of Peace Celebration such as theme "Advocate and Teach, Believe in Peacebuilding."

Guests who were invited to the affair include Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte, Rep. Mabel Bango-Acosta, provincial assistant Jesse Dureza, Linda Schaeffer, Philippine Football Federation (PFF) representative, Dec. 18, Uni Holland, of the GTZ office in Manila and senior advisor on poverty alleviation and conflict management, and leaders of the Bishop-Ulama Conference.

The opening ceremony will start at 8 am at the Tondo football Grounds.

This will also serve as the launching program for a series of football festivals that will be conducted early next year in all the other provincial football associations all over Mindanao by the GTZ through their GIFT Program (German Initiative in Football Towards Peace in Mindanao).

The festivity, showcasing the talents of more than a thousand children in Davao, argues well for football grassroots development project which breeds upcoming players for their soccer teams in national competitions.

And while the children are still far from bringing World Cup glory to the country, their fierce rivalries in the field could echo a message of hope for a generation of soccer-loving peacemakers.

Cops bust rob gang preying on Indians

CALAMBA CITY—Police said they busted a robbery group preying on Indian nationals in Laguna after the arrest of three suspects who were caught robbing their victims in Barangay Bagong Kalsada this city on Wednesday afternoon, police said yesterday.

Supt. Roland Bautista, Calamba police chief, identified the suspects as Ismael Hapon, 23; Rolando Jalmasin, 20; and Arturio Acoy, 27, all of Barangay Mamatid, Cabuyao, Laguna.

He said the suspects, belonged to a group of robbery victimizing Indian businessmen who are into the banking business.

Bautista said police-men were on patrol at around 1 p.m. when they chanced upon a group of men acting with victims Jan Singh, 35, and his wife Shalini, 30, residents of Barangay Parian, Calamba.

Another victim, Ajay Sonkwa, 29, from Barangay Lamon Bayanan

What? No basketball? SWS poll sees big letdown

THE 2005 KBC/OOP BASKETBALL finals, the 23rd Southeast Asian Games is a big disappointment for Filipinos since it is one of the few sports events with the greatest public expectation of winning a medal, according to the Third Quarter 2005 Social Weather Survey.

To the question "In what sports do you expect the Philippines to win any medals at the coming SEA Games?" basketball (44 percent) and boxing (41 percent) were statistically tied as the top answers, with 14 sports groups named by at least 1.5 percent in the SWS survey.

Next to the public's expectations for Philippine medals were swimming (18 percent) and billiards (16 percent).

This were followed by athletics (14 percent), volleyball (12 percent), martial arts (10 percent), bowling (5 percent), chess (5 percent), tennis (4 percent), badminton (3 percent), football (3 percent), karate (2 percent) and baseball/softball (2 percent).

The Third Quarter 2005 Social Weather Survey was done on Aug. 26-Sept. 3, using face-to-face interviews of a national sample of 1,200 statistically representative adults.

Southeast Asia's royals coming for SEA Games

Front page 1

capital.

A total of 841 gold medals are up for grabs in 43 events, with the Philippine martial art, arnis as well as ballroom dancing making their debuts.

Tight security

Security is tight with a 17,000-strong police force on alert to ensure the safety of the thousands of athletes and officials taking part.

The Games, coupled with the approaching Yuletide season, will boost foreign tourist arrivals and help the government meet its target of 2.6 million inbound travelers this year, Philippine Tourism Secretary General Manager Roland Barbers said.

"We are expecting an upsurge in tourism receipts that would surpass last year's record and hopefully sustain this positive growth up to the first quarter of next year. The country's tourism stakeholders, the national and local government, are all prepared to take advantage of this occasion," Barbers said.

Not only members of foreign delegations but also their family members, friends, fans and game enthusiasts from Southeast Asia and elsewhere would be arriving in the Philippines. They would book hotels, eat in restaurants, visit museums and recreation centers and go shopping and sightseeing.

Tourism receipts

Aside from the sports delegations, the anticipated arrival of expatriates (OFWs/migrants) and visa-issuing overseas Filipino workers would also spur tourism in the last months of the year.

Barbers called the SEA Games "a big challenge to the Filipino people, most especially to political leaders from all fronts, to put our best foot forward as the entire international community will observe us during the historical sports extravaganza."

The DOT chief said President Macapagal-Arroyo herself had set the stage in recognizing the importance of hosting a major event as she ordered MMA Metro Manila Development Authority to give the metropolis a facelift.

Hopes for 139 medals

Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace Durano earlier projected receipts from the tourism industry to reach $2.5 billion this year.

Philippine Olympic Committee chair Robert Aventajado said the country was angling for gold medals in boxing, equestrian, taekwondo and other martial arts, as well as athletics.

"We are targeting some 120 gold medals this year, and we are doing our best to hold on to," Aventajado told Agence France-Presse.

But football will be the main attraction after basketball was pulled from the event in the last minute due to a long-standing squabble among local officials and defending champions Thailand's withdrawal.

Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Burma (Myanmar), the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam have join football roster in Bacolod, where the game enjoys a huge local following.

"I believe Thailand is still the team to beat," Aventajado said, but added that the Philippines will give them a run for their money while a strong Vietnam squad will also be up there.

"The Philippine football team is considered to be one the country has ever assembled, bolstered by six Filipino foreigners including brothers Phillip Jarvis and James Joseph Younghusband who live in Britain.

Football revival

The brothers are considered the great hope of reviving love ball in the Philippines, which is currently ranked a lowly 139th in the world known ion big division.

Both have played in reserve team matches for English club Chelsea, and the Philippines is banking on the experience to give it an edge.

"We have a great team and I'm confident that everyone will deliver," 18-year-old striker Phillip Jarvis told reporters in Bacolod.

Partners Aston Villa and Sag Last striker Fred Ricks, who used to manage Thailand and a now coaching Indonesia, also believes Thailand remains the team to beat.

TRACK AND FIELD Iconic members practice at the Rizal Memorial Stadium for the Sea Games from Nov. 27 to Dec. 3.

SEA Games fast facts

THE 23RD SOUTHEAST Asian Games opens here on Sunday. Here are some key facts about the event:

- Teams from 11 countries are competing. They are Brunei, Cambodia, Timor-Leste, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.
- 841 gold medals are up for grabs in 43 events.
- The Games run from Nov. 27 to Dec. 3.
- An estimated 4,000 athletes will compete.
- The Southeast Asian Games was first held in Thailand in 1959.
- They were known as the Southeast Asian Peninsula Games until 1975.
- The Games are held every two years, with the last event hosted by Vietnam.
- Thailand is host in 2007.

AFP

A TOUCH OF ROYALTY Prince Norodom Ranariddh of the Kingdom of Cambodia strikes a victorious pose for the 23rd SEA Games and his country's athletes.

"They're the strongest team," he said.

Only a matter of time

Nevertheless, Philippine Football Federation president Johnny Romualdez assured his rivals not to underestimate the home team, without of a home crowd.

"Philippine football has gained stronger footings of late," Romualdez said, referring to the Younghusband brothers, adding that it was only a matter of time before the country started making a mark on the local ball map.

Ironically, the Philippines actually has entered football in Asia when in 1913 it organized the first regional match. It played China and won 5-1 in Manila, according to the Asian Football Federation.

But elsewhere in a story on the front page is returning to the Games after a 4-year hiatus. With report from Leila B. Salaverria, AFP

GMA allies rolling out red carpet for Garci

From page A1

Reyes Jr., Juan Ponce Enrile and others.

Romulo was replaced by fellow Nacionalista Party ally Esperanza "Cha" Cabral in Saturday's Cabinet shuffle announced by Sulu Rep. Benjie Aquino Jr., Bataan Rep. Enrique Garcia and Lanao del Norte Rep. Imelda Dimaporo (Inside story).

GARCILLANO

"The timing is really awful," said Pangkalayan Rep. Rodolfo Gadon. "This might be seen as an attempt to influence the outcome of the impeachment complaint of Mr. Garcillano."

"We all know about the disputes on the direction of the country's course ... While we know that this is a matter for members to decide, we know how crucial the role of the chairman is, especially in the House of Representatives," Bolet said, referring to Remulla.

"So many things are coming up. The reorganization of the committees, all of those, would be a confluence of events that might affect all-important image of this body," he added.

Waiting

"Let the chips fall where they may. We have all waited for Garcillano's return to provide important details that could put a closure to the opencontroversy," said Rep. Mauricio Domogan of Baguio City.

Garcillano, 48, disappeared following disclosures in June of the wiretaps. On July 14, he was based in Singapore, according to the Singapore Immigration ministry, from there, he reportedly flew to either the United Kingdom, the United States or Latin America.

Lawmakers said Garcillano had answered to the country or not by last Friday to clear his name over the controversial scandal that triggered the arrest order in the 4-year-old Arroyo presidency. Mr. Arroyo has denied any wrongdoing and escaped an impeachment attempt in the House.

Rep. Prospero Pichay Jr. of Surigao del Sur, a close Davidson ally, said the tension on Wednesday that Garcillano had called him from somewhere in Mindanao and that he was preparing for his first public appearance early next week.

The best Christmas gift

But presidential political adviser Ruben Ancheta said the closure of the case "should be the best gift that people can hope to have this Christmas."

"The opposition can go ahead and try to cheapen this matter, with foreign but ill-motivated people, we believe, are already tired of this silly game and are finally focused to unwind on the economic track," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said.

Bunye said that Garcillano had yet to tell all how the opposition had already "mapped out their scenario."

"But only those that the President's circle are, after all, not interested in focusing on the truth but only to maneuver the President out her seat proof," he said.

Outrage

Malacañang Rep. Gregory Ildefonso expressed outrage over the alleged resignation of Remulla, saying that Remulla was an "able and effective chairman and the investigations under his chairmanship were credible despite a few setbacks."

Rep. Antonio Cuenco of Cebu appealed to his colleagues to "refrain from using Garcillano's impending reappearance "for their grandstanding just to grab headlines and discredit him."

Cuenco noted that Garcillano's wife Grace had said she and her husband were willing to tell all. He said this "some talk" that Malacañang was behind Garcillano's return was all "disinformation."

"Garcillano is reportedly ready to come forward. He should get the full account from him and clarify things which have been the subject of the worst speculations and rumors from," Cuenco said.

Mountaintops Rep. Rufino Biazon also asked why Remulla was being replaced when he had shown "admirable competence" in his chairmanship of the "Hello Garci" investigations.

"But, we do acknowledge that," Biazon replied. "The leadership will find a suitable place for Congressman Remulla in its next feature."

Biazon dismissed as "absolutely baseless" the insinuation that Remulla's removal was timed with Garcillano's comeback.

"The stripping of Rep. Remulla's chairmanship as well as the three other cohorts was long overdue. This is in accordance with the standing consensus of the majority to effect a reorganization in the House after the impeachment," he said.

Administration Rep. Douglas Cagas (Davao del Sur) noted that the impending House revamp was reported by the media even before Garcillano's reported return.

Coincidence

"It was just a coincidence that the House reorganization took place just after Garcillano's arrival. But we are really expected the reorganization to take place anytime after the impeachments," he said.

During the debates on Wednesday night, Agusan del Norte Rep. Ma. Angelica Rosedell Amante rose to defend Dalisay Antonio, saying the lawmaker should not be prejudged.

Contacted minutes after his arrest, Remulla also chewed his backing behind "bitter-tasting. "She's OK. She's a fellow BP member and it's much better for me than for the one who was originally supposed to replace me," Remulla said.

Also yesterday, Garcillano's lawyer, Eddie Tamondong, said Garcillano had started seeking legal steps to convene before the September 22 Senate impasse Congress takes its recess next month, Bunye said.

Garci signed petition

Garcillano signed the petition asking the high tribunal to issue a temporary restraining order on the House move to oust him.

"I filed the petition in his behalf not only as counsel but as a friend," Tamondong said, adding that he personally met with Garcillano somewhere in Mindanao last week and that the latter even helped in the preparation of the petition.

Tamondong claimed, however, that he did not know the current whereabouts of Garcillano.

"He is with his wife and they are always on the move in order to protect themselves," the lawyer said, noting that the P1 million reward the House put on Garcillano had placed him in harm's way. With reports from Christine O. Avendaño, Jerome Aning, Philippine Star, Cathy C. Abraham, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Military: Still no action on Doble's case

By Dona Z. Pazolanan

FORMER ELECTION COMMISsioner Virgilio Garcillano has resurfaced, but the military still has to resolve allegations that one of its intelligence agents was the source of the "Hello Garci" tapes.

To date, Vidgi Hilal Doble, an operative of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines Bonifacio, has not been made to face any military sanction for his role in making public the alleged wiretapped Arroyo conversation (See related story on Page A11).

Gen. Generoso Senga, AFP chief of staff, said he did not know the progress of the investigation of Doble.

"That's not my administrative case. I don't know yet. I don't know the results," Senga said in a chance interview with reporters in Camp Aguinaldo.

He maintained that Doble's case was entirely handled by the Philippine National Police, which conducted the initial investigation.

Doble's claim he was kidnapped by Samuel Ong, ex-National Bureau of Investigation deputy chief, and was forced to say he was the source of the "Hello Garci" tapes.

Ong also disappeared and allegedly is now in the "witness protection program."

In a separate interview, AFP spokesperson Col. Ernesto Abad said the investigation of Doble was not dragging.

"We're not dragging our feet. We're not sitting on it. We're not sweeping it under the rug. We're not ignoring it. We're not trying to cover up anything. We're not trying to protect anybody. We're not trying to hide anything. We're not trying to do anything. We're just doing our job," Abad said.

Abad said he could not say how long the investigation was progressing.

FR. JOE DELOSA (second from right) leads the White Ribbon Movement rebirth in preparing for the imminent resurgence of former Comelec Commissioner Garcillano reportedly next week. Aside from Father Joe, here with are Amado Gutierrez Jr., Fr. Rudy Abao, Jay Barrios and Fr. Charlie Rivabert. (JOAN BONDOC)

Ong had claimed the master tape of the wiretaps had come from Doble, who received P2 million in exchange.

But after Doble was taken back into body's custody he denied any involvement and accused Ong of kidnapping him and bribing him to make up a story about the so-called "Hello Garci" tapes.

Doble's girlfriend, Marilena Ramos, however, said reporters that the body agent willingly went with Ong to seek refuge at San Carlos Seminary.

Despite the claim, the AFP had been reluctant to charge Doble with any wrongdoing as it maintained that body had no wiretapping capability.

On Oct. 5, Arroyo even defended Doble when he was asked why he was quick to punish Gen. Magtanggol Gatdula after testified in a Senate probe of the Hello Garci scandal when he was not as quick to act on others implicated in the controversy.

"Nothing has been proven against Doble," Arroyo had told reporters.

For fifth time, oil firms cut fuel ...

From page A1

diesel by P0.40 to P32.80 a liter as a result of softening international crude oil prices, according to oil officials. Petron and Pilipinas Shell Petroleum.

But the Department of Energy (DOE) said the cumulative decrease in pump prices imposed P1.75 a liter for diesel, gasoline and P1.30 a liter for diesel and kerosene.

Flying V was first

The reductions more than offset the increase in fuel prices caused by the implementation of the 10-percent expanded value-added tax on Nov. 1. The hike in the excise petroleum products and electricity.

Flying V was the first to implement the price reduction, an onenight-only cut last night, followed by Total Philippines and Eastern Petroleum as soon yesterday.

Other firms—Petron, Pilipinas Shell Petroleum, Caltex Philippines Inc., Unioil and Seaoil—did so at different hours in the morning.

"There is a big BIR [Bureau of Internal Revenue] tax increase [today], so that's why we have to adjust," said Virginia Ramirez, public affairs manager of Petron.

Pilipinas Shell spokesperson Rebecca Kimpel said the company had lowered its prices by a total of P2.00 a liter for gasoline products.

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Suspected meningo case sends Pasay into panic

By Jocelyn R. Uy

MANG. SUSPECTED PASAY STUDENT'S PROBLEM

WEEPING mothers, parents fetch their children from the Pedro Burgos Elementary School in Pasay City as classes were suspended yesterday following the death of a woman from suspected meningococcemia at the city general hospital Wednesday night. PHOTO BY RICHARD VISCONDE

15-year-old woman suspected to have contracted the deadly meningococcemia virus died at the city hospital at around 10:30 p.m. Wednesday.

The patient, identified as Marjorie Floreno, died at the Pasay City General Hospital's (PCGH) emergency room after being brought in by a friend on Nov. 12, said Dr. Lolo Bito-gonon, hospital director. She was immediately buried as the city's public cemetery.

Before her death, Floreno, a resident of Dasmariñas City, was running a fever for four days. When she was finally brought to the hospital, she was vomiting and had low blood pressure. During examinations, she also showed other symptoms of meningococcemia, becoming delirious and developing rashes.

Upon hearing of her death, hospital staff and patients started wearing surgical masks while officials of nearby schools sent students home. The PGH also closed its emergency room briefly to fumigate the area while staff members who had direct contact with the patient were given antibiotics.

A blood culture and sensitivity test was performed on the victim's blood sample yesterday at the San Juan De Dios Hospital. "The initial results of the examination said the patient was negative for meningo," Mangonon said.

However, the hospital staff could not leave a sigh of relief just yet until the final results are released later today.

Meningococcemia is a disease caused by the presence of bacteria called meningococcus in the bloodstream. Persistent fever, chills, weakness and even depression are the early symptoms of the disease that usually prey on children and young adults.

An outbreak of the disease in Baguio City last year claimed 38 lives. This year, two deaths were recorded in Baguio, four in the Mountain Province and three in Benguet.

"Meningococcemia isn't an airborne disease. It transmission from the victim to another person isn't that fast except when there is close contact with the victim," Mangonon said.

Following the incident, Mayor Wenceslao "Peewee" Trinidad sent teams from the city health office to schools near the hospital to brief students on the disease and inform them where to report suspicious cases of meningo.

Claudine, editor near settlement

By DJ Yap

ACTRESS CLAUDINE BARRETTO AND MAGAzine editor Jo-Ann Maglipon, who are locked in a standoff over privacy and press freedom issues, came a step closer to a settlement yesterday on the first day of mediation.

Raymund Fortun, Barretto's lawyer, offered to withdraw the civil suit against Maglipon and forgo any claims for damages if she will: one, stop the story against her to publish photos or articles of the actress without her written consent for a certain period.

Maglipon's lawyer Sandra Coronel, on the other hand, requested that Fortun write down the condition's parameters and submit it to them within five days so they could make a counterproposal.

BARRETTO

The lawyers made the offer and counteroffer before media, one officer knocks Lim at the Quezon City Hall of Justice.

Fortun initially asked that Maglipon "voluntarily desist" from approaching Barretto but later said his client was willing to forgo that if the journalist would agree to execute "responsible journalism."

Coronel countered that Maglipon had always exercised responsible journalism and that any prohibition imposed on her would be a violation of press freedom.

Speaking to reporters afterwards, both lawyers were optimistic that their clients would arrive at an amicable settlement soon.

On July, Barretto asked a Quezon City court to "forever restrain" Maglipon from coming within 200 meters of her, accusing the journalist of irresponsible journalism for allegedly publishing photos and stories that put her in a bad light.

She also sought P8 million in moral and exemplary damages.

Maglipon, editor in chief of Yes Magazine and executive editor of 110 Magazine, countered by filing seven counts of libel against Barretto for allegedly "misconstruing her expressions in interviews with the media."

Her daughter, Dr. Rhonda, also filed a libel suit against the actress for reportedly dragging her name into the controversy.

InqBox Question of the Week
Garci's back !
Your message to Garci ?
Senders of 3 best (E-Texts as published in Tuesday's InqBox will each receive an "Inquirer Shirt")
Use the inquirer box
name/age/city/message.
Text your answers to
2207 (Globe) or 205 (Smart).
(Maximum of 160 characters)

Charges junked vs suspected bombers

By Tina G. Santos

A JUDGE HAS DISMISSED CHARGES against two men accused of planting to bomb the Black Nazarene procession in Quiapo last January for lack of probable cause.

The dismissals of the charges of illegal possession of firearms and explosives against Jalpain Abusiri, 44, and Jaafar Ali Pendiki, 35, who continued in Hon. 24 order issued by Judge Nicki Dan of the Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 39.

Abusiri and Pendiki had asked the court to dismiss the case after it granted their motion motion to void the search warrant used by police some in raiding the Islamic Information Center in Malate, Manila, where they were arrested. "Now I feel relieved and vindicated. But our rights have been violated. I don't know how they could be rectified and how we can be given justice," Abusiri said in a phone interview.

Abusiri suspected Islamic militants were arrested by police during the raid on the Islamic center in the third floor of the Aguinaldo Building in Malate. Of the 16, only Abusiri and Pendiki were charged in the Manila prosecutor's office. The others were freed for lack of evidence against them.

The raid took place on Jan. 7, two days before the Black Nazarene procession, an annual event that attracts hundreds of thousands of male Catholic devotees. Police claimed they recovered several improvised explosives and high-powered firearms during the raid.

Abusiri, who worked as the center's manager, said he does not plan to file counterclaims against those involved in the operations.

"I don't have any money left to spend on litigation," he said. "I lost my job, my friends and some relatives because of false accusations hurled against us. Besides, it would be difficult to take on the fight considering what I am up against," he said.

But despite his bad experience, Abusiri said he remains optimistic that he would be able to clear all his name.

"It will be hard but I know we will make it," he said.

TV host bats for stricter laws to protect battered women

By DJ Yap

DESPITE HER PUBLIC IMAGE AS A COOL and down-Diana expert, Pinky Pavia admitted reminder that her private life was a "nightmare," a day after she charged her former partner with domestic abuse.

PHOTO

"I am a victim of violence," she said simply reading from a prepared statement where she recounted her experience with her former partner, whom she did not name.

Surrounded by supporters from the militant women's group Gabriela, Pavia spoke at a press conference in Quezon City yesterday and urged abused women to stand up for their rights, a day before the anniversary of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

A former TV personality and Bikoy expert, Pavia called up she endured domestic violence inflicted by her former lover. "When he was mad at the world, he took it out on me," she claimed. At one point, her former partner allegedly locked her in the room, causing her pain from an injury that doctors said was permanent, she added.

Pavia said she had sought and won a temporary protection order from a local court against the man, but her petition for a permanent protection order was still being heard. She had also filed a criminal complaint to the National Bureau of Investigation, which had endorsed it to the Department of Justice for preliminary investigation. "I do only feel for my life, the lives of my family and my friends. Before said, adding the 'harassment' had not abated, without elaborating.

Jalosjos' birthday fête in jail 'austere'

By Jocelyn R. Uy

JALOSJOS

FORMER 2nd-Romblon Rep. Romeo Jalosjos celebrated his 50th birthday yesterday at the New Bilibid Prison in what he could be described as a "low-key" affair.

Public as all-night a cappella group singing songs from the '70s and '80s in the background. Jalosjos' guests sat down at eight tables draped with blue and white cloth and shared what they wanted to eat from four buffet.

Simple fare

The food, provided by a caterer, was simple: grilled fish, sisig, fried rice and native food brought by his 62-year-old mother.

The diet, according to a guest who asked not want to be identified, was rather austere compared to Jalosjos' previous birthdays when he served several calves, pigs and goats.

Apart from his mother, the former solons other guests included his two children, several aides, a handful of relatives from Zamboanga and some inmates, aided the guest. "We didn't smell out invitations, so far was not really expecting anyone to come."

Early birds

But another source said some guests—most officials had dropped by early in the morning to greet the celebrant as when would be his last birthday behind bars. Jalosjos had earlier expressed optimism that he would be released by next month from the Muntinlupa City prison facility after his earlier appealed to President Macapagal-Arroyo for his release on humanitarian grounds.

Jalosjos is serving an 11-year term for raping an 11-year-old girl.

Since being imprisoned, the former solon has been prominent in other intimacy, even spending P6 million for the construction of a basketball court and recording it with a Pinoy-Bisaya radio station.

"My mission here is done. I have to continue these things outside," the source quoted him in saying.

Task force plea to hold shootout probe denied

By Lutgi A. del Puerto

THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS SERVICE (IAS) OF the Philippine National Police which is investigating the Pong City shootout incident involving suspected carjacker-protective chase-out a request from the lawyers of 13 Traffic Management Group (TMG) agents that it can, panel to inquiry.

Marites Corpus, who represents the officers of the TMG's operating unit, Task Force Limbo, said the IAS should stop its inquiry until other bodies probing the incident, such as the Commission on Human Rights, are done with their investigations.

"The panel will not be panel in hearing, unless summoned by a competent court," panel chair its Supt. Joselito Consigho said. "Reason ever as Corpus argued with panel members who asked him to put his motion in writing and submit it on Nov. 29.

The IAS is investigating the Nov. 7 incident at the Ortigas Center where 10 TMG agents killed three carjacking suspects in an alleged shootout.

A video seized after the incident showed the agents firing at the suspects who were slumped inside a car, leading to calls for a probe.

In yesterday's hearing, Corpus also asked chair Consigho inhibit himself from the panel because he had talked to the media. Corpus wanted to bar the press from covering the proceedings, particularly when intelligence officers were called to testify. The panel later banned cameras and recorders, but allowed reporters to take notes.

METROBRIEFS

Suspected killer acquitted

A Malaysian accused of masterminding a bombing attack at the Manila International Airport in October 2000 has been acquitted yesterday by Parañaque City Regional Trial Court Branch 258 Judge Fernando Leon. Zaini Kiyadin, charged with killing Lilia Dela, NAIA assistant general manager by Ramos and subordinates, was ordered released from prison yesterday, after prosecutors failed to prove his guilt in three election. Read at Page Two A7, as the mastermind, whoever sending his son... or, Edwin Dolor, on Sept. 9, 2000. He was killed in the Ninoy Aquino Hospital in Parañaque when the van the bomb found in carried. The judge identified Zainal failed to identify the accused as the one who rented the... Jocelyn R. Uy

Crackdown on cable chatrooms

Self-tail Dillard, Telecommunications Commission (NTC) is cracking down on cable chat rooms that have turned into sex channels, for a decade-to-end yesterday. But NTC ordered cable television operators with cable chat rooms to turn on Antimonial Film Dictionary (AFD) orders to all adult entertainment. It added that some chat rooms were not operating the way as per their language of explicit homosexuality in the rooms operate with it use. NTC Chair Ronald Solis said cable operators that fail to comply with the guidelines would be ordered and penalties, including the revocation of their licenses and permits. Jocelyn R. Uy

Brothers face raps for shooting boy

CALOOCAN (Updated)—Police arrested two siblings yesterday on charges of attempted murder and illegal possession of firearms in connection with the shooting of a 10-year-old boy in front of his home in Barangay 188 here on Wednesday.

Police identified the suspects as Rolando Ramos, 32, and Jonathan Ramos, 28, both residents of Block 20 Lot 28, Phase 2, Barangay 188. The victim, Jeffrey Ramos, suffered a gunshot wound in the left leg after he was shot by the suspects around 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday in front of his house in Phase 2, Barangay 188. The boy was rushed to the Caloocan City Medical Center for treatment. Police said the shooting was the result of a long-standing feud between the victim's family and the suspects. Police said the suspects were arrested after they were identified by witnesses. Rhea C. Dimaapi

Low back pain

A Low Back Pain will be held on Saturday, Nov. 26, at 1 p.m. at the Makati Medical Center. The forum is sponsored by the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation of MMC. Participants may call 8158421.

SPORTS

Hawks finally take flight

Pistons get back on track; Heat melt Trail Blazers

ATLANTA—THE ATLANTA HAWKS became the last NBA team to win a game, outlasting the Boston Celtics 128-117 Wednesday night on Al Harrington's career-high 34 points.

Zaza Pachulia added 28 points and 11 rebounds as the Hawks finally won after losing their first nine games...the longest winless start in franchise history.

...Joe Johnson scored 13 points, all in the second half, and made three free throws in the final 39 seconds to help the Hawks protect the lead.

Topping their previous scoring high for the season by 10 points, the Hawks finally won by shooting 56 percent from the field.

Paul Pierce hit a 3-pointer at the final buzzer for 30 points. Shelly Davis added 25 points for the Celtics, who fell to 0-9 on the road. Overall, Boston has lost four of its last five games.

In other games, Orlando defeated Washington, 95-83; Phoenix grounded Houston, 109-88; Denver stunned Dallas, 114-86; Charlotte creamed New York, 100-95; Miami crushed Portland, 116-79; Milwaukee whipped Philadelphia, 106-87; New Orleans nipped Minnesota, 94-89; Sacramento topped New Jersey, 134-105; The LA Clippers edged Toronto, 109-100; and San Antonio overhaul Golden State, 112-89.

In Auburn Hills, Michigan, Richard Hamilton scored 19 points and Chauncey Billups added 16 points and 11 assists in the Pistons' victory over the Denver Nuggets.

The victory came four days after the Pistons (9-1) lost to Boston's nine-game, 119-92 in Dallas. Detroit got seven players in double figures and had a season-high 26 assists.

Ben Wallace added 13 points and 21 rebounds for the Pistons, while reserve Maurice Evans scored a season-high 16.

In Houston, Shawn Marion and Jason Jones each scored 19 points and the Phoenix Suns made 14 of 27 3-pointers to beat the Rockets.

After hitting only 8-of-22 from 3-point range the previous two games, Phoenix had its highest 3-point total of the season. Jones was 5-of-13.

Derek Anderson scored 23 points for Houston. The Rockets, who have lost five straight, played without Tracy McGrady who missed his third straight game and sixth overall with back problems. He's day-to-day.

In Miami, Dwyane Wade scored 35 points and tied his personal high with 11 rebounds for his 22nd career double-double, leading the Heat past the Portland Trail Blazers.

Jason Williams added 16 points, and James Posey and Antoine Walker each had 12 for Miami. Coming off a loss at previously winless Toronto on Tuesday, the Heat improved to 3-3 without injured center Shaquille O'Neal.

Wade shot 7-of-12 from the field and 5-of-6 from the foul line in his sixth double-double of the season.

Zach Randolph scored 19 points and Jarrett Jack added 16 for Portland, which has lost three of four.

In Charlotte, North Carolina, Gerald Wallace returned from a wrist injury to score 20 points and guide nine rebounds, leading the Hornets past the New York Knicks.

Kenyon Martin added 22 points and Jason Kidd had 10 points and 11 rebounds for the Nets.

H&M center Alonzo Mourning hangs on the rim after finishing against guard Sergei Monia of the Portland Trail Blazers in the American Airlines Arena in Miami, Florida. —AP

BOXING

Thais target overall crown

By Cesirl Fajon
INQ Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—THEY refused to give any gold medal predictions, but one of Monday's boxers Dalerdeng Boy Ing champion Thailand still favorable as ever and is eyeing to overthrow the reign as the Southeast Asian Games.

Col. Thaliphan Promsopa, the Thailand manager, yesterday expressed confidence of the team bringing home the overall championship despite the Philippines' homecourt advantage.

"We will be No. 1," said Promsopa, who arrived here with the Thai group Wednesday night.

The Thais won the overall championship in Vietnam two years ago with a 7-gold, 1-silver, 1-bronze medal haul.

But Promsopa did not give any medal prediction pending the competitions down on Sunday at the University of St. La Salle-Gokongwei.

Promsopa said he is hoping that Thai boxers, trained by Cuban Jorge Hernandez Padron, would not meet the PH pugs in the first round.

"We hope to meet them in the gold medal matches," he added.

Thai coach Kamonsak Sutsuksi said the boxing team prepared for six months for the 22nd edition of the SEAG and is using the biennial meet as part of its building for the 2008 Olympics in Beijing.

Four of the seven gold medalists in Vietnam are in town along with two Athens Olympic veterans, who will be making up for the absences of Olympic champion Manus Boonjumnong.

This year's Thai team will be led by Athens silver medalist Worapoj Petchkoom and reigning World and Asian champion Somjit Jongjohor. Both Jongjohor (flyweight), Petchkoom (featherweight), Kaec Pongprayoon (lightweight) and Pichai Jeyjola (lightweight) are back to defend their SEA Games titles.

Also with the team are Suksri Payoon (light fly), Tweajtong Kiatjongkam (bantam), Kaewbuang Sangchanong (gate) and Athens Olympics quarterfinalist Somjit Prasathinphimai (middle).

Thailand press turns to Inquirer

BACOLOD CITY—THE PHILIPPINE Inquirer became a source of information for Thai journalists covering the Southeast Asian Games here.

One of the more than 50 Thai media personnel here, Chai Phraiphon of Bangkok-based Daily News quotes Inquirer sports on the preparations of Philippine-based Filipino athletes.

"I just read that seven boxers are from here. Good! Let me log in also to depth," he said as he admitted that most Thais are not very comfortable with English as their medium.

Phraiphon's newspaper's online edition may be accessed by typing www.dailynews.co.th but it is written in Thai language.

Football writer Sit Ortimbaud of the Bangkok Post also quoted in several features on Filipino brothers Philip James and James Joseph Youngbuhrand for his admiration on the Philippines versus Thailand clash.

Ortimbaud's story can be read at the Bangkok Post's online edition at www.bangkokpost.com. —Cesirl Fajon, INQ Visayas Bureau

All set for SEAG opening

SCOTT MACON: THE PHILIPPINES ARE TO top the medal table at the 23rd Southeast Asian Games beginning this weekend but will football the main focus for glory could go to Thailand.

The 10-day biennial showpiece officially opens Sunday in Manila, although events will be held in Bacolod, the central city of Cebu, and suburbs near the capital.

A total of 443 gold medals are up for grabs in 41 events, with the Philippine martial arts arnis as well as billiards debuting making their debuts.

Security is tight with a 17,000-strong police force on alert to ensure the safety of the three weeks of athletics and officials taking part, amid the threat of possible attacks by militants.

Philippine Olympic Committee chief Robert Aventajado said his country was angling for gold medals in boxing, equestrian, taekwondo and «One» martial arts, as well as in athletics.

"We are targeting some 120 gold medals this year, and we are doing our best to land as many," Aventajado said.

But football will be the main attraction after basketball was pulled from the event at the last minute due to a long-standing squabble among local officials, and defending champion Thailand are hot favorites.

Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam have sent football teams to the central city of Bacolod, where the game enjoys a huge local following.

"I believe Thailand is still the team to beat," Aventajado said, but added that the Philippines would give them a run for their money, while a strong Vietnam squad will also be up there.

The Philippine football team is considered the best the country has ever assembled, fuelled by six Filipino-foreigners including brothers Philip James and James Joseph Youngbuhrand, who live in Britain.

They are considered the great hope of football revival in the Philippines, currently ranked a lowly 109th on the world stage by the Fifa. AP

WHAT'S INSIDE

Cocktalec B1
Del Monte chatter B1
FirstGen may increase IPO size B7

BUSINESS

Editor Raul D. Pangalangan
Assistant Editor Connie B. Mendoza

Fitch in no hurry to raise RP rating

Gov't shrugs off rating firm's observations

By Michelle R. Nunez

THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE HAS shrugged off the observations of Fitch Ratings that the Philippines will may not be up for a credit rating upgrade.

According to Finance Secretary Margarito Teves, what matters is that the country is getting positive responses from the financial markets.

Teves said that the assessment of credit rating agencies on a country's fiscal and economic performance must have strong bearing on market decisions. But the country's actual fiscal performance, as perceived by market players, will be the deciding factor at the end of the day.

"Ratings are still relevant, but not all investors are totally reliant on credit ratings," said Finance Secretary Margarito "Gary" Teves at the sidelines of the Federation of Asian Economic Associations's annual meeting held yesterday. "It's like doing your job. You should not worry about what others might say, but only about getting your job done."

An official from Fitch Ratings commented that it was still premature to adjust the assessment in the outlook on the Philippines or in its credit ratings. (See related story on this page).

Finance Undersecretary Gil Beltran said that a country's effort to achieve a credit rating upgrade should not be a cause for concern, since it is common knowledge that rating agencies tend to react slowly on positive developments.

"It doesn't matter whether they (credit rating agencies) upgrade us or not."

PESO CONTINUES TO RALLY
A money changer counts peso and dollar bills in a Manila foreign exchange office. The peso extended a month-long rally to hit its highest level yesterday in over six months.

Outlook change to positive seen to be premature

By Doris C. Dumlao

A LONDON-BASED CREDIT rating firm yesterday said it was premature to consider an outlook or ratings upgrade for the Philippines, as weak revenue collection and political uncertainty hang over positive news on the expanded value-added tax.

"Our view now is still a negative, even with the positive developments ... we do consider fiscal woes," said James McCormack, Fitch Ratings head of Asia Sovereign Ratings. "The numbers are good, but when we look forward, we want to make sure that this will continue."

The credit rating firm has a negative outlook on Philippine sovereign ratings. Fitch also gave the country a rating one notches for investment grade.

In an interview at the sidelines of a Philippine Economic Society forum yesterday, McCormack

'05 balance of payments surplus seen hitting $2B

THE PHILIPPINES IS EXPECTING A balance of payments surplus of about $2 billion by the end of the year, exceeding the government's $800-million original target.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo yesterday said that despite huge debt payments scheduled for the fourth quarter, the country's BOP position would not be substantially lower than the January-October surplus of $1.22 billion.

"This is because of the continued inflows of remittances from OFWs (overseas Filipino workers) and foreign investments. We expect that in the last two months, if the BOP will remain strong," Guinigundo said.

The latest BSP projection represented a sharp turnaround from the deficit of $281 million in 2004.

The BSP official also said the BOP would likely revert to a surplus in November after posting a deficit of $406 million in October.

The BOP measures the foreign exchange transactions between the economic economy and the rest of the world. Its major components are the current account, and the capital and financial account.

The current account records trade in goods and services as well as cash transfers, such as those from migrant workers, while the capital and financial accounts cover foreign investment flows.

Any transaction that requires a payment of foreign exchange from a Philippine resident, like importation, is a

Opening up of more sectors to foreigners favored

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UCPB

By Bernie W. Bunbige

AN "UNPRECEDENTED MAJORITY" of business and labor leaders favor the opening up to foreign interests of industries and sectors through changes in the 1987 Constitution, according to the Constitution Consultation Commission.

The ConCom met with representatives of business and labor groups Wednesday night at the Diamond Hotel Within in Makati City, as part of the body's nationwide consultation rounds on how to amend the Constitution.

The consultation involved three separate workshops with participants of between 25 and 30 each—their tackled issues on economic reform and national patrimony; form of government; and structure of the republic.

After the workshops, the ConCom reported that an overwhelming majority of the participants favored full foreign ownership of businesses engaged in public utilities, educational institutions, advertising, development of large-scale natural resources, and ownership of residential land.

However, 19 of the 30 participants in the workshop on economic reform voted to maintain the ban on foreign ownership of mass media.

Also, 27 voted that the 40-percent cap on foreign ownership of private agricultural land be maintained.

Regarding the lease of public lands, all but one would re-extend the lease terms for foreigners to from 25 years to 50, renewable for another 50 years.

As for residential lands, 27 voted to keep the 40-percent cap on foreign ownership "subject to limitation on the area of land."

There were 29 leaders who took part in the workshop on the basis of governmental work: 11 coming in from of a cause-oriented or sectoral group.

One participant abstained, but 12 were "undecided because they lack familiarity with the parliamentary system."

According to Donald G. Dee, a commissioner representing the business sector, those consulted were mainly concerned about checks and balances "as they were outlined vis-à-vis" a parliamentary system with a strong president.

As for the structure of the state, 13 participants voted for a unitary system, opposing eight participants who pushed for a federal system.

The commissioners said major concerns against federalism was that the 17 regions already are already divided and can lose separate economies; it would increase the size of the bureaucracy that would be too costly to maintain.

ConCom Chair Jose Abueva said the body had held sectoral sessions with various sectors in various regions in Visayas and Mindanao last October.

"The cumulative votes we gathered indicate that the majority is in favor of the liberalization of the economy and, surprisingly even in Metro Manila Archdiolese," Abueva said.

Sectoral sessions in September upon the order of President Macapagal-Arroyo, the ConCom would conduct consultation consultations until the end of the month.

In the first half of December, the body would formulate proposals on how to amend the Constitution for submission to the Chief Executive on Dec. 15.

DEE

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Cebu Pacific, Air Phils cut fuel surcharges

By Clarissa S. Batino

SUPACH CEBU AIR PACIFIC AND AIR PHILIPPINES Corp. will cut their fuel surcharges on domestic flights by P50 per one-way trip, just like what Philippine Airlines had done, according to the Civil Aeronautics Board.

The CAB said it had approved the petitions of the two local carriers to reduce their surcharges by the slight drop in jet fuel prices.

The fuel surcharges on one-way flights are as follow: above P500 within Luzon; P650 from Luzon to Visayas and Visayas to Mindanao, and P900 to/from Luzon to Mindanao.

Foreign carriers, however, were still increasing their surcharges to higher fuel cost.

Adding US carrier Northwest collects a fuel surcharge of $65 for every one-way trip to and from Manila.

KLM Royal Dutch Airlines also raised its fuel surcharge to $40.

Airlines fear that cut their fuel surcharges every time the price of jet fuel drops or they will be penalized, according to CAB executive director Yotoo Hilario.

PAL cut its domestic fuel surcharge by P50 last week.

Hilario said competition would result to further cut in surcharges. In fact, he said fuel-related increases in the prices of airline tickets had been swamped by market forces.

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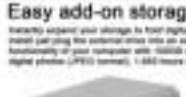

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RFM posts ₱68-M profit

RFM CORP. posted a net income of P68 million in the first nine months of the year, up 43 percent from year-ago level.

In a report filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission, RFM reported net earned 4.49 billion for the first three quarters, an increase of 31 percent from P4.06 billion in the same period in 2004.

Operating income reached P246 million in the first nine months, despite by 66 percent from P148 million a year ago, as total operating expenses increased to P4.24 billion from P3.91 billion last year's level.

RFM president and chief executive officer Jose Concepcion III attributed the sustained recovery of the paints by-unit Concepcion Supply to continuing discipline in operations and economy in strategy.

"While our sales have basically kept pace with last industry growth, we have

(story on)

VoIP firms must pass through telcos, NTC guidelines say

COMMERCIAL PLANNING TO AVOID CHEAP overseas calls through the Internet, or Voice over Internet Protocol, have to pass through the network of local telecoms, according to the National Telecommunications Commission.

The NTC yesterday issued guidelines for value-added service providers that would like to engage in VoIP service.

These companies are looking at more than eight million PC-to-phone working overseas as a major market for overseas calls for as low as 1.5 US cents a minute against the average rate of 40 US cents a minute.

VoIP players, said the NTC, cannot use foreign IP addresses in calling Philippine calls via the Internet.

The NTC had assigned codes for local exchange players.

All inbound and outbound VoIP traffic must pass through their networks.

When a call goes through a foreign IP address, it bypasses the network of the Philippine telecom firms.

And that, according to Lorenzo for a major telco, is illegal.

The NTC also said that while VoIP had been operational in some areas, it would be best if companies that are 60 percent owned by Philippine Basic Current A. Ramos

Cebu steps into power dispute

By Jaime S. Balandan and Cecile E. Fernandez
PDI Regional Bureau

CEBU CITY—CEBU Governor Gwendolyn Garcia yesterday called an emergency meeting with officials from the Visayan Electric Company, Cebu Private Power Corp. and Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) to solve a power shortage.

The move after ERC said it might cancel operations of its power generation plant in Barangay Kinalos here on Saturday due to a dispute over an electric supply contract with Vece.

Garcia said she hoped that a compromise agreement would be met by the parties during the meeting scheduled yesterday afternoon.

ERC supplies 22 percent of the requirements of Vece, equivalent to 40 megawatts.

Vece distributes power to the cities of Cebu, Mandaue and Talisay and the towns of Minglanilla, Naga, San Fernando, Consolacion and Liloan.

Vece said in a statement that it was always open to negotiations, but feared ERC's action "will" and "grossly disadvantageous to its customers."

Consumers seen to lift July-Sept. GDP growth

THE COUNTRY'S ANNUAL ECONOMIC growth most likely picked up in the third quarter, with strong consumption and gains in the services sector offsetting weak exports, a Finance official said.

But economists said high oil prices and a slow recovery in demand for exports, especially electronics, would limit 2005 growth to 5.0 percent, below the government target of 5.3 percent and less than last year's 6.1 percent.

The median forecast suggested the economy in the third quarter expanded 5.8 percent from a year earlier, picking up from annual growth of 4.8 percent in the second quarter and 4.6 percent in the first quarter.

"We've seen the net export sector make a slight to modest contribution to GDP," said Mike Alonso, regional economist at Standard Chartered Bank in Hong Kong. "But, I think there is good evidence we are seeing strong improvement in the overall consumption sector. If you look at it from an industry perspective, then obviously services will still be one of the big go-getters for growth."

Third-quarter growth data is due to be released next Tuesday.

Two economists forecast seasonally adjusted third-quarter growth of 1.4 percent and 1.5 percent, compared with second-quarter growth of 1.4 percent.

The other eight economists did not provide quarterly forecasts.

Economic Planning Secretary Ingrid Gutierrez in October said that the economy probably grew between 5.2 percent and 5.7 percent in the third quarter.

The government expects the services sector, which includes telecommunications, call centers, real estate and finance, to carry its first half annual growth of 6.5 percent into the second half.

Strong remittances from more than 8 million Filipinos working overseas is underpinning consumer spending, despite high prices of oil and other goods and a weak rise in services.

Meanwhile, investment and the construction—which support the poor and provide precious dollar reserves to the country—are funding investments in the property sector. This in turn fuels stronger activity in construction and manufacturing.

"There have been significant inflows into the economy," said Bill Belchere, chief economist for Asia at Macquarie Securities in Hong Kong. "Domestic economic consumption and remittances have been very strong."

Last week, the government said the Philippines, which makes up a fifth of GDP, grew 2.0% percent in the third quarter from a year earlier, maintaining the same annual momentum as the second quarter.

Growth for the full year is expected to be 5 percent, the finance official said, the same as an upgraded forecast by the International Monetary Fund announced on Tuesday.

The country has cut its economic growth forecast for 2006 to 5.7-6.3 percent from 6.3-7.3 percent, still expectations for high oil prices would persist throughout next [illegible]. Reuters

Fitch in no hurry . . .

From page B1

said that the implementation of the VAT law this month was "definitely good news," but the firm was in no hurry to lift the "negative" outlook on Philippine sovereign ratings.

"[Fiscal reform] doesn't end with the VAT," McCormack said. "It only begins with the VAT. What we want to hear over here, governments is, what's next? What are the plans going forward in terms of medium-term fiscal plan to increase revenues?"

The VAT law, a before-target budget deficit and record remittances by Filipinos working overseas, have helped push the peso to its highest level in more than six months and made the currency Asia's best performer so far this year.

Spreads have narrowed on the foreign-debt

Gov't . . .

From page B1

reporters. "They have not moved, but the market has already given us their verdict. That's the important thing."

Tolosa noted that from 500 basis points, when the government launched $1-billion bonds in September, the 10-year Philippine sovereign bonds had tightened to 390 basis points in the first week of November, following the implementation of the VAT Reform Law.

The new VAT law basically expand(s) the coverage of the tax to include oil and electricity among others, and will raise the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent in 2006.

With the new VAT law, the DOF expects to generate close to P80 billion in additional revenue a year.

'05 Balance . . .

From page B1

deficit seen in the BOP while any transaction that gives rise to a receipt of foreign exchange, like repatriation or inward remittances, is counted as [illegible].

The BOP is closely linked to the country's foreign reserves which, in turn, were boosted by proceeds from the government's foreign borrowings this year.

The GIR—consisting of the BSP's gross foreign currency holdings, gold reserves, special drawing rights from multilateral institutions and foreign investments—is an indicator of the country's ability to service the foreign exchange requirements of the economy. (Sarah Dumlao

Shares . . .

From page B1

The benchmark 30-company Philippine Stock Exchange index rose up 13.98 points, or 0.6 percent, to 2,139.05, after shedding 1.3 percent Wednesday.

Traders and investors continued to feed on the government's improving fiscal outlook, which was bolstered by National Treasurer Omar Cruz's assessment that the government would likely end the year with a budget deficit of P148 billion ($3.3 billion)—well below the P160 billion ($3.5 billion) ceiling.

"Overall, we're feeling OK," said Hahn Apolo, JM Money Securities president. "Investors are still upbeat. The correction yesterday was more of an opportunity to hunt for bargains."

Globe Telecom led the list of index gainers, closing 1.8 percent higher at P795 on foreign buying.

Other gainers included the country's largest oil refiner Petron, up 3.5 percent at P4.10 on strong third-quarter financial performance and growth prospects based on its expanding petrochemical business.

Other stocks that enjoyed strong demand were Ayala Land, up one percent at P9.70, and Jollibee, higher by 2.6 percent at P46.

All sectoral indicators advanced. Casinos led declines 48 to 39, while 54 stocks were unchanged. AP

Del Monte chatter

THE LORENZO-DE-LAPPSAR FAMILY (of Ayi Ahmad-V Pangilinan's quest to take over Del Monte Pacific, that is, if we are to believe the pro-Lorenzo grapevine).

According to the grapevine, Lorenzo's new partner, Jose "Butch" Campos Jr., has raised more than $200 million in cash to fund acquisition of the Lorenzos for the control of the Singapore-listed, San Philippine-based, fruit and beverage conglomerate.

Campos (dated the next chart apparently was from the family's fabulous coffers, after his father, United Laboratories founder Jose Yao Campos Sr., turned down his proposal to take the family's assets (or fund the reverse) to spend.

In reaction to this column's description of him on Wednesday as a "Goliath Jerry," the Goliath grapevine chortled that Butch Campos had completely lifted-gagged from the country's largest pharmaceuticals company after he was replaced earlier this year as chair by his elder sister, Joy Campos-Lotilla.

Apparently, Goliath did not want to tangle with the well-connected Indonesian principals of First Pacific, considering that Goliath has a substantial and growing presence in the southeast neighborhood.

In exchange, the Campos pair sold longstanding boardroom foes Sandy Ker — the food conglomerate company that makes UFC Matcha, Juliana Pizza, Nona cologne as well as Dawn Pure wine, Bling Tonnic lychee water and Mehnaz pads. (Ask mom)—to Butch, the second of their three children.

In addition to the sentimental reasons, Butch was also given Greenfields Development Corp., the family's landholding company that now controls half of The Fort.

According to the investment banking chatter, Butch has secured an arrangement with the Lorenzos to buy out Macroberg, the Lorenzos' 3rd Monte holding company, and eventually Sold in Del Monte Pacific with his fourth-cast mini food venture.

But Pangilinan's First Pacific Group, however, was inclined to think that such talk was "premature," given the short timeframe against the amount of capital work needed by investment banks to line up such leveraged financing.

Even the positive amounts raised by Butch Campos, $200 million, is hardly adequate to finance a Del Monte takeover/offer.

In contrast, First Pacific said it had set aside $450 million to acquire the 46 percent stake of the ailing Indian food conglomerate Ceres in Del Monte, and another $200 million to fund a general offer for the rest of the minority shareholders, including the Lorenzos' 25 percent stake.

Merry-go-round

✦ THE ALLIANCE of Greenfields Development Corp. and the Ayalas in The Fort has been further deepened: after EDC principal Butch Campos hired ex-Ayala Land president Francisco Licuanan III as advisor.

✦ THE LATE David Chua was one of the founders of Far East Bank and Trust Co. Chua has four sons; the youngest, Tristan, decided he has had enough of the empire-class title, and is set to open the Silicon Saga studio in Salcedo Village's 66 Corporate Center.

Heard through the grapevine

CEBU PACIFIC is determined to follow Philippine Airlines and launch its own Beijing and Shanghai flights by midyear next year.

(Email cocktales_pdi@pdi.com.ph or cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com)

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

IMI gets $80-M loan for Speedy-Tech deal

By Elizabeth L. Sandoval

INTEGRATED MICROELECTRONICS Inc. is teaming for more than companies to buy now that it is nearing the completion of its acquisition of Singaporean patented circuit board maker Speedy-Tech Electronics, business sources said.

The sources also confirmed that IMI had already reached an agreement for an $80-million loan with ICBC Bank, one of the biggest banks in Central Europe and the largest in Belgium, to complete its buyout of Speedy-Tech.

The drawdown of the loan may start in December when IMI pays Speedy-Tech shareholders.

IMI has agreed to buy all of Speedy-Tech's 376.2 million outstanding shares for $0.80 million or roughly P6 billion. IMI has P1.5 billion in cash and is poised to tap existing credit facilities for additional funds.

The Ayala-led IMI gained the blessing of shareholders for its merger with Speedy-Tech Electronics Ltd. by the end of the year.

Upon the completion of the merger, Speedy-Tech will become a wholly-owned subsidiary of IMI, and its shares will be delisted from the Singapore Stock Exchange.

IMI had said the merger was a significant step towards forming a strong mid-sized electronics manufacturing service player in the Asia Pacific region. It said the move would also allow both companies to build on each other's strengths in their respective markets and gain access to a broader and more diversified customer base. The increased scale of operations will better position the merged entity to secure larger and more attractive outsourcing contracts from both existing and prospective customers, IMI had said in a statement.

Under the terms of the merger, Speedy-Tech shareholders will receive either 1.2249 IMI shares or approximately 31.7 cents in cash for every one Speedy-Tech share.

"We are delighted that our respective shareholders have shown an alignment of our strategic interests, bringing us closer to the completion of this merger. We look forward to creating a strong global entity that is able to provide customers with a fully-integrated range of solutions for their product development, engineering, and manufacturing needs," Arthur K. Tan, president of IMI had said.

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Haydee Yorac's legacy

By Ernesto M. Ordoñez

HAYDEE YORAC HAS BEEN buried. And properly so, at the Libingan ng mga Bayani. Through her life and work, Yorac showed what a true heroine can do during these challenging times. Her legacy lives on: In the work she accomplished, her writings and the people she inspired to fight for justice. Today, this legacy is under threat.

Three leaders

A large part of Yorac's legacy is the transparency she brought to government work and her fight for the coconut levy to go to the coconut farmers. She nominated for the United Coconut Planter's Bank (UCPB) board three farmer leaders, who shared her passion and commitment, to carry on this legacy.

At the UCPB board meeting this morning, these leaders will be replaced. All three have impressive track records in helping small farmers, including risking their lives during the Martial Law regime.

COMMENTARY

Vicente Fabe is chair of Pambansang Kilusan ng Samahang Magsasaka, the largest peasant organization in the country. Omi Royondoyan is the executive director of the Philippine Peasant Institute, a think tank known for its scholarly publications on small farmer issues. Joey Faustino is the executive director of the Coconut Industry Reform Movement, the acknowledged lead NGO in pursuing the coconut levy for small farmers.

Replacing them are Datu Mao Andong Jr., Alejandro Asis and Oscar Solidar. The new UCPB directors are all connected with the Partido Democratikong Sosialista ng Pilipina led by National Security Adviser Bert Gonzalez. Solidar is currently employed in Gonzalez's office.

Main issue

The three replaced leaders are signatories to a full page announcement in the Philippine Daily Inquirer yesterday. Its headline reads: "Huwag Ikompromiso ang Coconut Levy, Itaguyod ang Interes ng mga Maliliit na Magniniyog!" (Do not compromise the coconut levy, promote the interest of the small coconut farmers). This is the same position Yorac fought for.

The battle has high stakes. For the last 30 years, 20 million affected Filipinos in the coconut producing areas have been waiting to benefit from the coconut levy. Each family makes an average of only P20,000 a year, or P1,700 a month. They are among the poorest in the country's coconut-producing provinces. Thankfully, there has been some progress. On Dec. 14, 2001, the Supreme Court declared that coco levy funds are public funds and, therefore, they cannot belong to any private individual. Three years later, on Dec. 28, 2004, the Sandiganbayan declared that UCPB, the Coconut Industry and Investment Fund (CIIF) firms, the 14 holding companies, and the 27-percent CIIF-San Miguel Corp. shares worth P50 billion were "owned by the government in trust for all the coconut farmers."

Compromise settlements

Here is where the compromise settlement opposed by Yorac and the three farmer leaders comes into play. Though the SC decision has been made, it has not yet been made executory. Therefore, the farmers still cannot access the P50 billion worth of funds.

To get the P50 billion, the compromise suggestion is that an out-of-court settlement be made giving the money to organizations rather than programs to help the small farmers. The three leaders object. They fear that the funds may go to dubious organizations that may use the money for purposes other than helping the small farmers.

Also, the high court has yet to decide on whether the 20 percent CIIF-SMC shares worth P37 billion should go to the coconut farmers or other parties. On this issue, there is another compromise proposal that endangers the possibility of the P37 billion going to small coconut farmers. It was also opposed by the three leaders. These leaders though can easily be out-voted in the 13-person UCPB board, they can officially record their stand. They can also make the UCPB board decisions transparent, the way Yorac had advocated.

Conclusion

Many say that the three new directors are being appointed to replace the three leaders precisely to agree with the compromise settlements that are very disadvantageous to the small coconut farmers. In addition, they will block transparency by keeping the UCPB proceedings confidential.

This may be unfair. The new directors may continue Yorac's legacy, support the small farmers, and provide continuing transparency for this critical process, affecting at least P87 billion.

The Alyansa Agrikultura's 39 federations and organizations had unanimously stated in their published common agri-fishery agenda that the coco levy should be "declared as a special fund for coconut farmers." It is hoped that the new directors pursue this goal. If they do otherwise, they betray not only Yorac's legacy, but the 20 million Filipinos affected by the coconut levy. The small coconut farmers have a right to know what will happen. They, together with the three replaced leaders, have pledged that they will keep watch.

(The author is Agriwatch chair; former Cabinet secretary for Presidential Flagship Programs and Projects, and former undersecretary for agriculture, and trade and industry. For inquiries and suggestions, email agriwatchphil @ yahoo.com or telefax 8516635)

CEB increases frequency by 75%

CEBU PACIFIC WILL MOUNT MORE DOMESTIC flights to accommodate the surge of passengers during the holiday rush and availing of the airline's 'Go' fares, which raised bookings by 90 percent just days after they were launched last week.

Starting Dec. 6, CEB will fly every day from Cebu to Zamboanga instead of the usual five flights per week, and double to eight times per week its Manila-Kalibo service. Fares start at P998 for Cebu-Zamboanga and P888 for Manila-Kalibo.

On Dec. 7, the Davao-Zamboanga service will be increased from four round-trip flights a week to daily flights with fares starting at P998; the Manila-Roxas service will also be increased from four round-trip flights a week to daily flights, with fares starting at P688; and the Manila-Tagbilaran flights will go up to 14 times a week from 11, with fares starting at P1,188.

By Dec. 9, CEB will also resume its daily Manila-Puerto Princessa flights with fares as low as P888.

The additional flights are equivalent to a 75 percent increase in frequency for the routes mentioned.

"We have seen a considerable increase in demand brought about by the launch of the 'Go' fares, so we will add frequencies to specific destinations in time for the holiday peak. With this, we will be able to offer more 'Go' fares and accommodate more travelers this holiday season and throughout 2006," Bong Mojica, CEB general manager said.

"We advise travelers to book early to get these great 'Go' fares," he said.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

'GREENSHOE OPTION'

First Gen may increase IPO size

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

FIRST GENERATION CORP., THE holding company of the Lopez group's power generation assets, may offer additional shares under the "greenshoe option" in its proposed initial public offering of P12 billion worth of shares, industry sources confirmed.

The greenshoe option allows First Gen to offer additional shares equivalent to 15 percent of the final offer size.

This is in addition to a potential increase in demand for the shares when these are sold through an IPO, possibly by the end of the year.

First Gen is hoping an IPO by December to raise P11.43 billion in fresh funds.

If it pushes through this year, First Gen will be the third major IPO after utility firm Manila Water Co. and holding firm AM International Corp.

First Gen earlier said it would offer between 351.6 and 419.9 million shares at P31 (for 419.9 million) to P34 (for 351.6 million) a share.

First Gen has tapped BDO Investment Bank and CLSA Limited as its international underwriters, and BDO Capital & Investment Corp. for the local issue.

First Gen will use the proceeds to improve its existing facilities, expand capacity and acquire power generation facilities.

Investors said should First Gen push through with its IPO, it would have the financial muscle needed to bid for major power projects to be sold by the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM).

First Gen earlier raised P6.4 billion from the issuance of fixed rate bonds.

For the six months ending June 30, First Gen reported a 11.5 percent increase in its revenues to P11.43 billion, from P10.26 billion in the same period last year, due to higher electricity sales.

Revenues from power sales also increased by 12.2 percent to P11.75 billion in the six-month period from P10.4 billion the previous year.

First Gen is focused on power generation through subsidiaries and affiliates.

The company is the largest Filipino-owned and-controlled independent power producer in the Philippines with an installed capacity of 1,727 megawatts.

The company has stakes in four major operating power generation projects namely the 1,000-megawatt Santa Rita plant in Batangas (60 percent), the 500-MW San Lorenzo plant also in Batangas (60 percent), the 225-MW Bacong plant in La Union (27.5 percent) and the 1.6-GW Ilijan combined-cycle natural gas plant (100 percent).

First Gen is 40.4-percent owned by First Philippine Holdings.

The balance is held by trust Infrastructure Development Company (IDC), Power Corp. (ad) and Institutional Japan.

Investment Funds of	UNIT PRICES (in Php)	
	Nov. 23, 2005	Nov. 24, 2005
Fixed Income Fund	1.074116	1.068498
Balanced Fund	1.069831	1.063353
Equity Fund	1.061147	1.049126

Mini Stop eyes more outlets

ROBINSONS GDS, the recreation arm of Robinsons Land Corp., is the owner of the Mini-Stop franchise, and its network of 24-hour convenience stores is set to grow by 25 percent next year as part of its United in Success (Unis) program.

Robinsons unit group head Johnson Robert Go Jr. said around 180 stores or 75 percent of its current network of 134 stores are run by franchisees.

Go said that next year, Mini Stop will expand its network by 45 to 50 stores, of which between 35 and 40 stores will be company-owned.

Go said franchising was an ideal method for expansion.

"I think directly managing stores puts a lot of pressure on RFM ... focused on improving gross margins and operating margins to all the major business units of RFM," Unjieco said.

RFM's main business units include the branded food division, covering a wide range of milk and juice products to various packaging formats, processed and canned meat products, pasta and other consumer food-based products; the ice cream business, which is a 50:50 joint venture with Unilever Philippines Inc.; the Subic-based flour business, which RFM privatized in the country, and its wholly-owned property development subsidiary, Philippine Townships, Inc.

Conception said that even as management continued its focus on lowering cost structures, if bad material ceiling can save high-volume products for the mass market.

With the fourth quarter traditionally a strong period for food and beverage products, Conception expressed optimism that RFM would complete the year on a high note.

DISCLOSURES

UBOX, and Nanoarena Holdings Co. Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on Dec. 15, 10 a.m., at Club Filipino, Greenhills, San Juan. Stockholders of record as of Oct. 19 will be entitled to notice of and vote at the meeting.

* * *

ABSCBN Broadcasting Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on Dec. 20, 10 a.m. at Jardine Clarke Building, Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue, Makati City. Stockholders of record as of Nov. 28 are entitled to notice of and vote at the meeting.

* * *

PHILIPPINE Stock Exchange Inc. accepted the resignation of Mona Ma. Mikaela Angeles as director.

* * *

FABIAN Holdings Inc. brought back 62,000 of its shares at P1.25 a share and another 100,000 shares at 1.28 each. Compiled by Chona Kabagdo-Pil-Bienvenido

EXCHANGE

Currency (1 unit)	Unit	Peso Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
Australian Dollar	AUD	1.46165	46.8800
Japan	JPY	0.0077.78	0.00819
United Kingdom	GBP	1.68659	86.8700
Hong Kong	HKD	0.12832	7.3850
Switzerland	CHF	0.80614	47.6414
Canada	CAD	0.73191	45.2898
European Union	EUR	0.84734	49.7000
Australia	AUD	0.62469	36.7500
Malaysia	MYR	0.26000	15.2000
Saudi Arabia	SAR	0.26667	15.6000
Singapore	SGD	0.59000	34.4000
Thailand	THB	0.02500	1.4700
UAE	AED	0.26000	15.2000
Korea	KRW	0.00100	0.0600
Kuwait	KWD	3.38000	197.8000
India	INR	0.02000	1.1700
Indonesia	IDR	0.00010	0.0060
Mexico	MXN	0.08000	4.6800
New Zealand	NZD	0.58000	33.9400
Norway	NOK	0.13000	7.6100
Pakistan	PKR	0.01000	0.5900
South Africa	ZAR	0.13000	7.6100
Sweden	SEK	0.11000	6.4300
Turkey	TRY	0.65000	38.0300
Taiwan	TWD	0.03000	1.7600
Vietnam	VND	0.00006	0.0035

Smart sets investment of $60M in 3G system

MIGUEL

By Carlos S. Bulos

SMART COMMUNICATIONS INC. will spend about P3.3 billion (roughly $60 million) to upgrade its network and offer third generation or 3G mobile services.

Smart president Napoleon Nazareno said the investment would be spread out over the next two years.

The country's largest mobile carrier first conducted its first user-network 3G video-call in Mactan, Cebu City yesterday.

The video call in Cebu, conducted during an investment trip to promote the Visayan capital, was made between Smart and roaming partner Telecom Italia Mobile.

"This day marks another milestone in Smart's history," Smart head for Network Services Division Rolando Peña said. "The success of this video call is proof of Smart's capability to offer 3G-enabled services and its commitment to always stay a step ahead of the others."

Smart claimed it started conducting 3G tests as early as December 2000.

Nazareno said part of the amount to be spent on the new 3G software system network would be used to the planned capital investments of PLA to P30 billion that Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. had earmarked for 2002.

Going into 3G is designed by incumbent mobile players with a strong digital wireless network as they only need to upgrade the existing system.

New player 3Z Communications Inc., for instance, said it would spend P27 billion over a five-year period for a 3G system.

The National Telecommunications Commission is expected to award the 3G frequencies to qualified carriers early next year.

Third generation or 3G wireless communications technology allows the transmission of data, voice and video at 384 kbps to 2mbps against the current technology's maximum speed of 9.6 kbps.

The speed allows easier Internet browsing and faster downloading of large files.

The first generation refers to the "cellular mobile radio telephone" that used analog voice signaling.

The 1990s, on the other hand, advanced to the second generation featuring the digital voice encoding technology.

[illegible]

LIFESTYLE

Editor Cielo Banal Formoso

Riviera radiance

TAN-GAN TAKES ITS CUE from the Mediterranean's tribute stamp for its Holiday Resort collection that's sure to get you through that jam-packed social calendar.

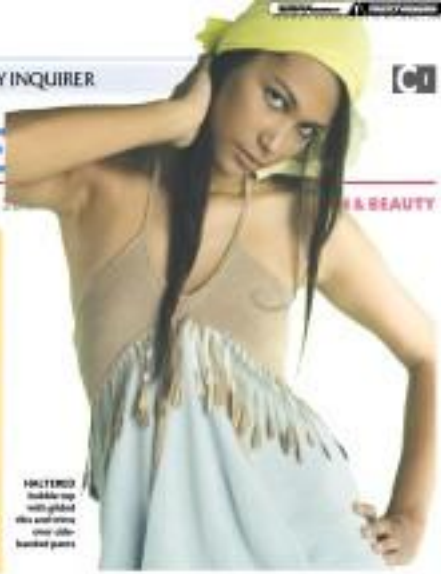
Easy, laid pieces bear the glitzy zeal of history native to the Riviera. Dress 'em in sexy silhouettes. Halter dresses, bubble skirts and shorts are for flaunting your best assets. Flared trousers and lovely 50-ounce boats create fantasy emotion. All in colors inspired by the region's natural relation: greens and deep purples of hand-painted tiles, the cool golden colors of mint, cake, and mango unsoaked bonded with clear sky blues, sand, and terra cotta. Threads of gold and wool and gilt accessories catch the light to keep all eyes on you.

If a fabulous getaway is exactly what you need, it's highly recommended that you take that quick trip to Tan Gan.

Meanwhile, Tan Gan and Tiffany & Co. are presenting their holiday collections at an all-women tea consevere at the Manila Peninsula's The Conservatory upper lobby.

Tan Gan is located at SM Megamall, SM City North Edsa Annex, SM City Manila and Festival Supermall. E-mail hilarangco@tangan.com or call 0917 5283 079 or 0922 9462687.

ASYMMETRIC convertible bubble top over pencil knee-length skirt



HALTERED bubble top with gilded ribs and trims over side-banded pants

MEDITERRANEAN-ite-inspired Monokini top

V-NECK chemise tank with gilded stripes and trims

SIDE and open-back tunic with pseudo-beaded plunging back with faux flowers over shorts

Modern + vintage

Mishmash, mixmatch!

FASHION IS NO SCIENCE, BUT experimentation is key to achieving fun, funky looks that are uniquely you. Nowadays, it's all about mixing and matching distinct pieces that come together seamlessly. Or creating stark contrasts that beg for attention—with you being the common variable!

There are more ways than one to create a stylish merry mix of highs and lows, but it all starts with a vivid imagination and a bit of daring do.

Put together pieces that don't necessarily go together and galvanize the typical pairs (formal top+high-low denim) combinations. Although the look is reliable and acceptable enough, it is so "been there, done that"—unless you're wearing a fantastic, one-of-a-kind top, that is.

You can opt to channel your inner Hepburn, Audrey or Coco, or decide to go ultra-hip channeling those stylish personalities all in one. It's really up to you. There are no rules to hold you back, so confident and creative all you want. Be sure of all, trust your instincts.

E-mail the author at ajbalcita@inquirer.com.ph

Classic + funky

Tailored + deconstructed

Mishmash tips for the blushing fashionista

IF YOU WANT TO JUST TO BE ON THE SAFE SIDE of anything combination of pieces, try these simple yet effective ways of creating more subtle combinations:

- **Stick to basic silhouettes**

Not easy to mix and match effortlessly to try wearing classic silhouettes. No matter how well or bold your choice of prints or colors are, you can't go wrong if you stick to basic cuts that suit your body.

- **Texture**

Use different textures to create your very own mix. Pairing combine subtle materials like tweed with lace, silk with cotton, or even silk/tweed materials like woolen wool with flowing fabrics such as chiffon. The possibilities are endless and currently be toned down or according to your mood or best.

- **Use subtle prints**

Not quite ready to combine a graphic zebra print with a vintage polka dot? Let the "IDK? Don't wonder? Then use still one. It as for using more subtle global prints that are monochromatic or more restricted in color.

A pastel floral print would look great when combined with right-colored stripes, for instance. Check Paul Smith. And a

- **Be yourself**

There's really no one-size-fits-all rule when it comes to mixing trends. Your choice of clothes should reflect your own and what's comfortable for you. Don't be afraid to experiment.

So whether you choose to wear contrasts or match to perfection, be yourself. Infuse your

Designer + Garage

Be a fashion savant and lead the pack with unexpected combinations that are sure to turn heads

Formal + informal

in the mix is . . .

Compiled by Apples Alberto Guillermo

"... combining different trends from past decades like the '60s, '70s and '80s to achieve the look of the moment."
—Georgina Wilson, model/student

"... wearing a white tank with your boyfriend's old jeans and feeling damn sexy, then wearing haute couture and stilettos in total comfort. In the mix is fashion with attitude."
—Raya Manarapaii, fashion model/writer

"... a jungle of frequencies—the highs, the mids and the lows. It's a different recipe for every LP and the goal is to make each song shine, yet still be part of the whole. There are no formulas, just gut feel."
—Bamboo, musician

"... a thousand choices and one true love. The mix is the challenge of sorting out and the triumph of finding "the one"!"
—Jie Pambid, interior designer/dean, Philippine School of Interior Design

"... lots of water, fruits, vegetables, enough sleep, dental bleaching and a good sunscreen is attempt to create the fountain of youth."
—Marco Protacio, general manager, Waterfront Hotels and Casinos

Two M's and a night to remember

By Pam Pastor
Photos by Rudy Esparas

LAST WEDNESDAY, Peninsula Manila Conservatory served as the venue for two milestones in the empowered Pinay's life—the launch of Metrobank's Femme Visa credit card and the comeback of fab designer Michelle Sison after a three-year hiatus from the world of fashion.

Metrobank Card Corporation designed the Femme Visa Card in recognition of the importance of a reliable credit card that can satisfy the needs and wants of women. The credit card promises to answer a woman's every whim—be it on the luxury, wealth, shopping or convenience.

Shopping is an integral part of every woman's life. In the dawn to old her to finance management and utility. Metrobank Femme Visa features international acceptance in over 42 million establishments worldwide. Just look for the Visa logo. Femme Visa users can also share their privileges with four supplementary cardholders by assigning them monthly credit allowance.

And said partner doesn't have to be a chore—Femme cardholders can settle their bills at any of six hundred Metrobank or Bank Transfer-ATMs, if they have accounts at these banks.

Unique services

Apart from their credit card needs, Metrobank Femme Visa owners can stay ahead by providing other unique services. To aid career-driven women, cardholders are automatically enrolled in JobsDB.com's short servers, which features items of job openings that suit their qualifications.

Career Femme Seminars tackle topics like financial management, career strategies and fashion and beauty tips, and are held exclusively for credit card users. Femme Plaza lets cardholders redeem up to 10 times the points spent on dining, cash coupons and dining freebies. Other offers include Metrobank Femme Rewards and the recently hit Femme Friends—a fun makeover of a selected Femme Visa user.

MICHELLE Sison of her welcomed comeback: "I'm so happy and overwhelmed."

Ultimate, accomplished, well-rounded, independent, responsible and fashionable—these is the profile of a Femme Visa cardholder. And that's the very woman Michelle Sison chose the credit card's launch as the venue for her fashion comeback.

"The event is reflective of the people I cater to. They are decisive and they know what they want," said Michelle.

Michelle, who has been missed by fashion fans, showcased around 50 of her new bags in a fashion show and an exhibit that showcased her entire collection.

What are the accessories of an empowered woman? A reliable credit card and a one-of-a-kind designer bag

Spiked the curiousness among women in the crowd. Michelle admitted to being a little jittery. "I was a bit nervous. I haven't done a show in so long."

But she had no reason to worry. Before the end of the night, all the bags were sold out and many orders and inquiries were pouring in. So big surprise there, really.

When asked to name her favorite bag, Michelle said, "I can't choose just one. I love them all."

Limited quantities

The beaded bags are one-of-a-kind, while the leather and fabric bags come in very limited quantities. Michelle refuses to do replicas of bags she's already sold. "Some people have been asking me to make the same bags I sold them! I've made similar ones but not exact copies. I'm sure the people who bought the bags wouldn't want someone else to have the exact same thing," she explained.

The bags, which were inspired by many things including Michelle's trips to Cambodia and Tagaytay, come in various colors, designs, fabrics and textures that will appeal to women of different tastes.

The masterpieces were named after people. "Some are inspired by my friends. Other bags are named one of famous people." Check out the bags inspired by Tessa Prieto-Valdes, Tita Yap, Andy Roxhol and Michael the Archangel.

Michelle has also started designing clothes again. "I started a month ago. I partnered with Joel Ong. Some more orders are coming in because of the holiday season."

By November, Michelle's bags will be available in Forma. "I want to go back because that's where I started and they took good care of me. I'm also talking to Rustan's so we can have the bags in Cebu."

Those unions will soon be extended with people, based on the extensive Michelle's bags received at the launch.

Tess M's—Metrobank and Michelle Sison, around 50 bags and one powerful credit card. There was a recipe for success in no time.

For orders and inquiries, call Michelle Sison at 897-5280/83 or 0906 33.

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